

OTTAWA MUST LEAD ON E-CIGARETTE REGULATION REFORM

It's time for the federal government to get over its timidity around regulating the vaping industry.

It is no longer acceptable to take a cautious approach. That evidence is now in, and it shows that vaping can lead to serious lung disorders, and more frequent users are at greater risk.

That would be bad enough if the risk was largely to the original vaping audience - adults using e-cigarettes to reduce or stop consuming combustible tobacco products. The risk for reforming smokers is real, but vaping remains preferable to continuing to smoke tobacco and inhaling the related toxins.

But the growth isn't among adult smokers. Vaping rates among that group are stable. It's among kids, most of whom start vaping not to quit tobacco but because it's considered cool. One health survey of 75,000 Canadian students in Grades 9 to 12 asked about reasons for vaping. Only 4 per cent of e-cigarette users said they used them to quit smoking, another 4 per cent said they used vaping to reduce cigarette consumption - and 73 per cent said they used out of "curiosity" or "to try something new."

Health Canada is now officially warning about the health risks involved with vaping. Some provinces are taking action. Ontario recently moved to ban e-cigarette advertising in convenience stores. It's a half measure at best, but it's something.

But the federal government, for some reason, continues to drag its feet. Now, with the new minority government settling in and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thinking about the mandate letters (marching orders, if you prefer) he will be handing over to his ministers, is an ideal time to get very serious about regulation.

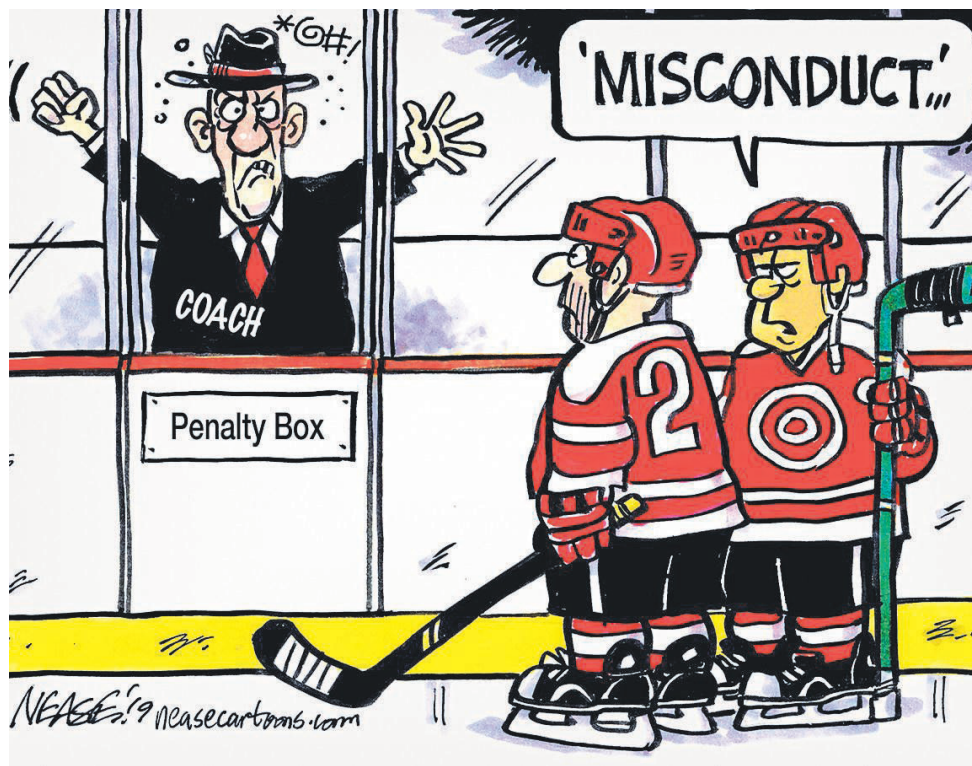
An example: Legal marijuana products have to carry ingredient information. Vape products don't. That makes no sense. Also, the piecemeal approach now in place around marketing needs to evolve into a national strategy. No exceptions, no loopholes: E-cigarettes and affiliated products must never be marketed to minors, and if they are, penalties need to be stiff, public and consistent. The government should also consider lowering nicotine limits in vape products. In Britain, where e-cigarettes have a track record in reducing adult smoking, nicotine limits are lower than for North American markets.

Some argue an outright ban is justifiable under the circumstances. We disagree. A ban has a certain appeal, but it's a safe bet any attempted ban would lead to a black market for vaping products. That would lead to even less control and more risk for vulnerable consumers.

E-cigarettes remain a viable option for those who smoke traditional tobacco products. There's no need to overregulate that part of the market. But when it comes to nicotine addiction among young consumers, we're losing the battle. The federal government will have no trouble finding allies to pass thoughtful and forceful new regulatory measures - the NDP and Greens, at minimum, would be supportive.

Time to get moving before this problem escalates further.

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DON'T BE A BYSTANDER TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

HELP END THE ABUSE, SAYS BEAULIEU



DIANE BEAULIEU
Column

The holiday season is well upon us and we're seeing the hustle and bustle of shoppers and decorations going up everywhere.

Walking down Brant Street in Burlington one night, I could hear music playing; the snow was falling lightly and for a moment I let myself believe I was in a Hallmark episode. It would be easy to convince oneself that all is quiet and right with our community.

That evening I was speaking at City Hall, a guest of the Orange the World grandmothers, the theme this year, Genera-

tion Equality - Stands Against Rape.

While the setting was beautiful, the topic I was to speak about was/is complex and heartbreaking - and yes it happens in our community.

Last year the Halton Regional Police Services (HRPS) responded to over 3,300 domestic violence calls. Statistics Canada tells us that 80 per cent of domestic violence occurrences go unreported.

Rape and sexual assaults are similarly underreported. Our shelters are at 95-105 per cent capacity at all times.

Women and children are struggling to find affordable housing and safe shelter for themselves and their children.

Everyone deserves to be safe in their homes and on our streets. If you see something that doesn't look right or you can see that someone is in an unsafe situation, call the police.

If you know the person and it is safe to do so, approach them and help them find resources that could help them.

Only by holding perpetrators accountable can we make a difference. One woman or girl is killed every other day in Canada.

The victim could be your neighbor, mother, sister, aunt or friend.

Don't be a bystander. Let them know there is help in the community.

Think about the 1 in 2 who will die at the hands of a partner or the woman next door who has no food or gifts for her children or the families who know their loved one is being abused or trafficked.

The crisis line numbers at Halton Women's Place are 905-332-7892 in Burlington and 905-878-8555 in Milton. Our phones are answered 24/7 by crisis intervention counselors.

Help us help them. "Because a Life Without Violence Is The Only Life To Live".

Diane Beaulieu is the Executive Director of Halton Women's Place

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