

OTTAWA MUST DO MORE TO CURB YOUTH VAPING

Health Canada's new measures to curb youth vaping are akin to fighting a house fire with a garden hose.

After months and months of studies and consultations, and years of health organizations sounding the alarm on the dangers of vaping, the agency announced it is planning to ban e-cigarette promotions from convenience stores, public transit and all social media platforms. That's all to the good.

But, unbelievably, it isn't yet ready to follow the recommendations of numerous health experts and restrict the sale of flavoured e-cigarettes or set limits on nicotine levels.

This tepid response comes as the government also announced that the number of students in grades 7 to 12 who have used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days doubled in the last year.

But according to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the government's go-slow approach is "to leave room for proper science. We're a government that works on evidence-based decisions." Really?

How about this for evidence: a recent survey conducted by Smoke-Free Nova Scotia found 96 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds who vaped said they preferred flavoured products.

Further, many said they would likely stop vaping if flavours were eliminated.

The tobacco giants who sell vaping products have been able to keep government regulations at bay by insisting they need to be able to provide a range of flavours to encourage existing adult smokers to change over to a safer product. But it's getting tougher to buy that argument.

First, e-cigarettes are now being blamed for causing pulmonary illnesses in a handful of cases in Canada and more than 2,000 cases in the U.S. including at least 47 deaths. Second, does the government really believe the tobacco giants are actually trying to lure adult smokers to e-cigarettes with flavours such as cherry cheesecake and strawberry ice cream?

Doctors and health organizations such as the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society and Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco have been warning governments for years about the health risks posed by e-cigarettes.

This is not some far-off threat. For the first time in 30 years the number of teens who reported smoking is up. The time to prevent more kids from getting hooked is now.

But for some reason the federal government is taking its own sweet time and unconscionably letting Big Tobacco put the health of young people at risk.

The Trudeau government says it will look at other measures to curb vaping this year. That's what they said last year. And that's clearly not good enough, fast enough.

It's time to put out this three-alarm fire with every measure available before more kids get hooked on nicotine and cigarettes and end up in hospital on ventilators, or worse.

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SNAPSHOT



Tony Fortunato photo

A black squirrel searches for food in a Georgetown backyard. Got a great local photo you'd like to share? Send it to sleblanc@metroland.com, along with a brief description.

TIME TO TACKLE YOUR OVERSPENDING

SMALL STEPS CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE, WRITES PETER WATSON



PETER WATSON
Column

Are you feeling depressed about financial issues in this first month of the new year? If so, you are not alone.

A survey conducted by FP Canada (formerly known as the Financial Planning Standards Council) and Credit Canada asked Canadians what makes this time of year particularly uncomfortable when it comes to finances.

One in five Canadians says their credit card balances are larger than their savings account.

By Blue Monday, which is usually the third Monday of January and reported as the most depressing day of

the year, six per cent of Canadians have already broken their financial New Year's resolutions.

As we all know, many overspend during the holidays. This was stated by 21 per cent of those surveyed.

It is interesting to see how age affects those surveyed.

Younger adults under the age of 45 are feeling the financial blues at an alarming rate of 68 per cent versus only 41 per cent for those age 45 and older.

Ongoing worries about finances are not pleasant. Unfortunately, more and more Canadians are caught up in the dilemma of overspending encouraged by easy credit.

The October 2019 data compiled by the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy showed that Canadians are filing the highest number of personal insolvencies in a decade. This is a real problem.

And real problems deserve real solutions.

For those who consider this the ideal time to tackle

overspending, here are a few suggestions.

First, decide if this is important enough for you to change your habits, taking into account that most resolutions are often abandoned.

Then, start with some easily achievable goals. Something as simple as controlling your spending for the next 24 hours.

Try doing this for seven days in a row and celebrate your success after week one.

After a week or two of achieving your financial responsibility goal, start paying down credit card debt.

Taking control of your finances is key. You will be surprised at how even small steps in the right direction can make a difference in your outlook, and hopefully banish your financial blues.

Peter Watson, of Watson Investments MBA, CFP, R.F.P., CIM, FCSI, offers a weekly financial planning column, Dollars & Sense. He can be contacted through www.watsoninvestment.com.

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