

7.3 (a)(g)

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Vaping Product Tax - Item 9.3 General Issues Committee Minutes

From: Mark Tyndall
Sent: Tuesday, May 6, 2025 1:17 AM
To: <mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca>
Subject: Vaping Product Tax - Item 9.3 General Issues Committee Minutes

May 5, 2025

Dear Councillors,

It was brought to my attention that the Municipality of Hamilton is considering an added tax on vaping products. It is listed as Item 9.3 in the General Issues Committee Minutes.

This is in response to concerns regarding youth vaping surveys which show relatively high rates of experimentation among high school students - 16% have used a vape in the past 30 days according to a national youth survey from 2022. It should be noted that since 2018, vaping rates among high school students have been consistently falling.

I am a professor at the University of British Columbia and was formerly the Director of the BC Centre for Disease Control. I attended McMaster University for medical school and completed my internal medicine training there. I have many great memories of my time in Hamilton. McMaster prepared me for a career in infectious diseases, public health, addiction, and harm reduction.

I have spent the last two years writing a book on vaping which comes out in June. It is called Vaping: Behind the Smoke and Fears. (details can be found at: <http://drmarktyndallauthor.com>). Writing and researching the book has made me an expert in the area.

I understand the intense pressure that political leaders are under to do something about youth vaping. Public health leaders and institutions have conducted, in my view, misguided and aggressive campaigns to undermine vaping. They have lost sight of their primary goal which should be to reduce or even eliminate cigarettes. It makes absolutely no sense to incentivize cigarettes – that kill people - by putting disproportionate taxation on vaping products – that have minimal health impact. In fact, if we were truly interested in reducing suffering and death, everyone in Hamilton who smokes cigarettes would be provided vaping products for free.

I do understand the concern around young people vaping. Like other risky behaviors – cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, other drugs, unprotected sex – we struggle to minimize exposure. But we know that the best way to do this is through honest conversations and education. This is particularly pertinent for vaping.

Raising taxes on commercially available vaping products will have little impact on youth access, will encourage purchases from the illegal market, and will inevitably lead to contamination of e-liquids that are mixed up in someone's kitchen. The most serious unintended consequence however will be to extend the tragic epidemic of cigarettes in the city. By increasing the price of vaping products, some people who have successfully transitioned to vaping will go back to cigarettes. Some people who are considering a transition to vaping will decide it is too expensive and continue smoking. Also vaping shops in your city will simply go out of business as people will buy their vaping products elsewhere.

I hope that you will reconsider the taxation proposal. It will do infinitely more harm than good and is a step backwards in the fight to eliminate cigarettes in Hamilton and across the country.

Sincerely,

Mark Tyndall MD ScD FRCPC

Clinical Professor, University of British Columbia.