



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-03160**

BY: **MR. IACONO (ALFRED-PELLAN)**

DATE: **JANUARY 31, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **Ms. PAM DAMOFF**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Tobacco

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death and disease in Canada. It plays a role in causing over 40 diseases, including cancer, respiratory ailments, and heart disease. In 2012 alone, 45,000 Canadians died from smoking related diseases and, in 2017, 91,000 Canadians became daily smokers. Moreover, 86% of current adult daily smokers had their first cigarette by age 18.

Tobacco packaging is a powerful promotional vehicle. Research has shown that Plain and Standardized Appearance (PSA) reduces the appeal and attractiveness of tobacco products, particularly among young people. For this reason, the Minister of Health's mandate letter included the commitment to complete the introduction of plain packaging requirements for tobacco products. This is an important step forward in protecting Canadians, particularly youth, from the health hazards of tobacco use.

While the United Kingdom and France have not applied plain packaging measures to cigars, applying these measures to all tobacco products, including cigars, is consistent with international precedent, as seen in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, as well as World Health Organization guidelines. France did not apply plain packaging measures to all products, and as a result has seen greater promotion of products that were exempt, including shisha and cigarillos. Moreover, in France, well-known cigarette brand names, such as Marlboro and Lucky Strike, are now being used to market cigarillos.

Canadian experience has also shown that when exemptions are made for some tobacco products, marketing strategies are adapted to continue to market products that appeal to youth. For instance, Health Canada's 2009 flavour ban on little cigars prompted many manufacturers to increase the weight of their little cigars to continue marketing flavoured cigars that are attractive to youth.

Unfortunately, cigars are being used by Canadian youth today. Based on 2016-2017 data from the Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey, 2.5% of students in grades 7-12 reported having used a cigar in the past 30 days. The highest rate of use was among males in grades 10-12, where 6.7% admitted to having used a cigar in the past 30 days.

As indicated, the health related dangers of tobacco use are clear. The Government of Canada is taking this evidence, the experiences of other jurisdictions, and feedback received during the *Canada Gazette*, Part 1 consultation into account as final regulations are developed.