

CIGARILLOS May 2008 (Updated September 2008)

Mini-cigars, or cigarillos, are considered to be “cigars” since they are tobacco-wrapped, but look more cigarette-like. Most are filtered and the same size as (or smaller than) cigarettes. Cigarillos are often fruit, candy or alcohol-flavoured, and can be purchased in any convenience store either as singles in plastic tubes (such as “Prime Time”) or in packs of 4-8, with prices ranging from 69¢/individual cigarillo to a few dollars for a pack of 8. Flavours include cherry, vanilla, chocolate, piña colada, grape, apple, mint, strawberry and peach, among others.

There are no health warnings on individually-sold cigarillos in wraps or tubes, not all cigarillo packages have Health Canada warnings, and there are no controls on flavours.

Research on cigarillo emissions conducted by Health Canada¹ shows that cigarillos deliver higher levels of toxicants than cigarettes (that is, much higher nitrosamines (one of the most potent carcinogens in tobacco), hydrogen cyanide and other nitrogen-based compounds), and that non-filtered products have higher yields than filtered products.

For the first time, Health Canada included questions on cigarillos in its annual Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) in 2007. Data released for the full year 2007 on August 25th showed that 37% of Canadians 15 years and older reported ever having tried little cigars, and 40% reported smoking them in the past 30 days. Among Canadian youth aged 15-19, 32% reported ever having tried little cigars, and 11% reported smoking a little cigar in the past 30 days. Forty-six percent of young adults aged 20-24 reported ever having tried little cigars, and 10% reported smoking a little cigar in the past 30 days.²

Health Canada’s May 30/08 consultation paper on regulation of little cigars proposed a change in package size to a minimum on 20 and the creation of a definition for “little cigars”. Health warning requirements for packaging were raised as a possibility only, and no mention was made of flavourings (in contrast to Cathy Sabiston’s statements to the June/08 CCAT meeting).

Issues:

- Federal vs. provincial regulation?
- Package size, health warnings, flavourings, all of the preceding?
- Ranking among other issues (contraband, plain packaging, renewed health warnings, cost recovery litigation)?

Founding Agencies

Canadian Cancer Society
Ontario Division

Heart and Stroke
Foundation of Ontario

Non-Smokers’
Rights Association

Ontario Lung Association

Ontario Medical Association

Supporting Agencies

Association of Local
Public Health Agencies

Cancer Care Ontario

Ontario Association of
Children’s Aid Societies

Ontario Association of
Naturopathic Doctors

Ontario Federation of Home
and School Associations

Ontario Physical and Health
Education Association

Ontario Public Health
Association

Physicians for a
Smoke-Free Canada

Registered Nurses
Association of Ontario

The Ontario College
of Family Physicians

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¹ “Little Cigars – Big Concerns”, Levasseur, G; Hutchings, H; Kaiserman, MJ, authors of research, Evaluation and Surveillance, Tobacco Control Program, Health Canada. Poster presentation, 61st Tobacco Science Research Conference, Charlotte, NC, USA. 23-26 September 2007.
http://www.cqct.qc.ca/Documents_docs/DOCU_2008/DOCU_07_00_00_HC_LittleCigars.pdf.

² Health Canada. Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) 2007. August 25, 2008.

* See also CCTC/PCCN May/08 cigarillo webinar, “Flava Flava” on CCTC private members’ site (<http://portal.cctc.ca>)