



Press release
For immediate release

Celebrating 25 years and thousands free from tobacco! New: You can quit vaping with the *Challenge*

Montréal, December 20, 2023 – Today, the *Quit to Win! Challenge* opens for registration for the 25th consecutive year. Since its first edition in 2000, there have been more than half a million registrations. Once again, smokers are invited to make a commitment not to smoke for 6 weeks, from February 5 to March 17. New this year: The *Challenge* is also open to people who want to stop vaping. To boost motivation, those who succeed in their challenge have a chance to win the grand prize of \$5,000. Register now at quitchallenge.ca.

25 years and as relevant as ever

In 1999, Capsana and the Direction de santé publique of the Montréal Health and Social Services Agency came up with the idea of launching a major province-wide campaign to encourage Quebecers to quit smoking, using a positive and motivating approach. This initiative was inspired by the World Health Organization's global *Quit & Win* challenge. Its objective was, and still is, to contribute to the fight against smoking, which is responsible for the vast majority of cases of COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), a third of cancers, and a significant proportion of cardiovascular diseases. Smoking is the leading cause of avoidable death, and it prematurely kills one in two smokers.

After 25 years, the *Quit to Win! Challenge* remains relevant in Quebec given that 13.2% of the population still smokes, which represents nearly one million people.¹ Moreover, nearly 6 out of 10 people who smoke would like to quit,² which is why it so important to offer cessation support initiatives like the *Challenge*.

“Focusing on prevention is one of our priorities under the Health Plan. Quitting smoking and vaping is an important step for your health and for reducing the pressure on our network. The *Quit to Win! Challenge* has been proving its worth for 25 years now by motivating people who want to stop smoking or vaping to adopt healthy lifestyle habits,” notes Christian Dubé, Minister of Health.

Vaping, an addiction to break

In Quebec, as in the rest of Canada, the use of vaping products has been steadily increasing over the last ten years. Vaping and smoking have a number of things in common, including an addiction to nicotine, since most vaping products contain this highly addictive substance.

¹ Statistics Canada (2022). Table 13-10-0096-01. *Health characteristics, annual estimates*.

² Institut de la statistique du Québec (2021). *Enquête québécoise sur le tabac et les produits de vapotage 2020*. Cahier technique pour le fichier maître, Québec, L'Institut, 209 p

“Even without the harmful products associated with burning tobacco, vaping is not without health risks. Inhaling the chemicals and metals that can be found in aerosols can damage the lungs or exacerbate existing lung diseases such as asthma. Beyond addiction, nicotine can affect memory, concentration, learning and mood in young people aged 25 and under whose brains are still developing,” explains *Challenge* spokesperson Alexandre Chagnon, pharmacist, digital health expert, and founder of Vitri.ai.

This is why the *Challenge* has been expanded this year to include people who want to quit vaping. Given that around 4 out of 10 vapers³ say they want to quit, this will be a welcome addition!

Useful tools and support

In addition to being able to rely on strength in numbers as thousands of people across Quebec will take up the *Challenge* at the same time, participants will also have access to a range of free support tools during and after the 6 weeks:

- The quitchallenge.ca website
- Encouragement texts or emails
- The Facebook and Instagram communities
- The free, confidential I QUIT NOW services: in person at the Quit Smoking Centres, by phone at 1-866-527-7383, online at the I QUIT NOW website (iquitnow.qc.ca), or by text message through the Short Messages Against Tobacco (SMAT) service

Participants can also talk to a healthcare professional at any time, in particular their pharmacist owner affiliated to Jean Coutu, a proud partner of the *Challenge*, to get help during their cessation process.

Register at quitchallenge.ca by February 5, 2024.

About the *Quit to Win! Challenge*

The *Quit to Win! Challenge* is a province-wide campaign that provides free support to people who want to quit smoking or vaping through a collective challenge. Launched in 2000 by Capsana, the *Challenge* is carried out in partnership with several public and private organizations, namely the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Quebec’s Directions régionales de santé publique, the Canadian Cancer Society, and the Jean Coutu Group. To find out more, visit quitchallenge.ca.

About Capsana

Capsana is a social enterprise owned by the ÉPIC Foundation, which is associated with the Montreal Heart Institute, and by the Fondation PSI. Its mission is to help individuals take an active role in their health. To find out more, visit capsana.ca.

³ Institut de la statistique du Québec (2022). *Le vapotage chez les Québécois: données de l’Enquête québécoise sur le tabac et les produits de vapotage 2020*.

Source:

quitchallenge.ca | facebook.com/defitabac
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