Statement to CBC News from Eric Morrissette, chief of media relations, communication and public affairs branch for Health Canada:

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency are monitoring closely the vaping illness situation in Canada in the U.S., and are in close contact with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to better understand their investigations into the cause or causes of the illnesses.

To date, investigations have indicated that most of the individuals who have fallen ill have vaped products that contain THC obtained from informal sources, such as friends and family, or through the illegal market, and that vitamin E acetate has been identified as a chemical of concern.

There is currently a vast illegal market for cannabis vaping products in Canada and some Canadians choose to use cannabis vaping products despite their inherent risks. Providing legal access to strictly regulated cannabis products is one of the best ways to protect Canadians from the risks posed by products from the illegal market, which are not subject to any standards, testing or oversight for safety or quality.

The *Cannabis Act* and its Regulations establish strict controls to help lower the known and foreseeable risks of cannabis use and better safeguard the health of Canadian consumers, including those additional risks posed by the illegal market, and to enable Health Canada to respond to emerging health issues in a timely manner.

For example, cannabis vaping products may be produced only by a processor with a licence from Health Canada. Licensed processors must comply with strict requirements and standards, including Good Production Practices, product formulation restrictions, quality standards on ingredients, limits on microbial and chemical contaminants and mandatory testing requirements. These requirements are backed by Health Canada regular and unannounced inspections.

Health Canada's priority is the health and safety of Canadians. Given recent concern about vaping-associated lung illnesses, as a precautionary measure, Health Canada has obtained additional information from licensed processors on the ingredients and product formulation of certain vaping products they intend to sell in Canada's legal market. Health Canada has proactively assessed this information to determine whether these products contain any expressly prohibited ingredient, or any other substance or

thing that may cause injury to the health of the user when the product is used as intended or in a reasonably foreseeable way. Health Canada has reviewed all additional information received to date and has notified a few licensed processors of certain concerns where warranted. In these cases, appropriate action has been taken by the licensed processors to protect the health and safety of Canadians. Two specific ingredients of concern, namely vitamin E acetate and diacetyl, have not been identified in any of the submissions from licensed processors.

Licence holders are required to test vaping liquids containing cannabis for contaminants and to maintain records of the test results, and Health Canada can verify these test results during inspections and take samples for independent testing.

In developing the regulations governing the production and sale of new cannabis products, including vaping products, Health Canada took into consideration risks associated with various routes of exposure to cannabis. Inhalation poses potential health risks because of the greater sensitivity and vulnerability of lung tissue to certain chemicals. For this reason, some of the regulatory requirements pertaining to inhalable cannabis extracts, such as vaping products, are even more stringent than those for other non-inhaled cannabis products.

Ingredients that can be used in cannabis vaping products are restricted. It is prohibited for cannabis extracts, including cannabis vaping products, to contain anything that may cause injury to the health of the user when the cannabis product is used as intended or in a reasonably foreseeable way. The use of sugars, sweeteners or sweetening agents as ingredients in cannabis vaping products is not allowed. Similar to the rules for nicotine vaping products, the use of any ingredient listed in Column 1 of Schedule 2 to the *Tobacco and Vaping Products Act* is also not permitted in cannabis vaping products. This includes prohibiting the addition of colouring agents, mineral nutrients and vitamins, including vitamin E acetate.

All cannabis licence holders must comply with the provisions of the *Cannabis Act* and the *Cannabis Regulations,* including not selling a cannabis product that contains anything that may cause injury to the health of the user when used as intended or in a reasonably foreseeable way.