

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
7 November 2022 / 7 novembre 2022**

**Submitted on October 27, 2022
Soumis le 27 octobre 2022**

**Submitted by
Soumis par:**

Dr. / D^{re} Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health/ Médecin chef en santé publique

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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2022-OPH-HPP-0003

SUBJECT: Ottawa Public Health Submission to the Government of Canada on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation in Canada

OBJET: Soumission de Santé publique Ottawa présentée au gouvernement du Canada quant à la légalisation et la réglementation du cannabis au Canada

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit approve the Medical Officer of Health's submission to the Government of Canada's consultation on the legalization and regulation of cannabis in Canada, as outlined in Document 1.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa approuve la soumission de la médecin-chef en santé publique au gouvernement

de Canada quant à la légalisation et la réglementation du cannabis au Canada, telle que présentée dans le document 1.

BACKGROUND

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has been monitoring the legalization and regulation of cannabis and responding to opportunities for fostering a public health approach that minimizes the potential health risks and public health impacts. OPH continues to implement an evidence-informed, [comprehensive 4-point plan](#), approved by the Ottawa Board of Health on February 5, 2018, to reduce the harms from cannabis use. This plan responds to the on-going community need to address the legalization of cannabis for non-medical use, including the expanding new product classes, such as edibles and vaping, with a focus on youth, young adults, and individuals who are pregnant and breast/chest feeding.

On February September 22, 2022, the Government of Canada launched a [consultation on taking stock of progress](#) relating to the legalization and regulation of cannabis in Canada. The deadline to submit feedback is November 21, 2022.

The purpose of this report is to seek the Board's approval of the recommendations outlined in the submission, attached as Document 1.

DISCUSSION

The *Cannabis Act*, which came into force on October 17, 2018, requires that the Minister of Health cause a review of the *Act* and its administration and operation three years after its coming into force. To fulfill these requirements, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions have tasked an independent Expert Panel with leading the legislative review. Key themes include:

- impacts on young persons
- progress towards providing adults with access to strictly regulated, lower risk legal cannabis products
- progress made in deterring criminal activity and displacing the illicit cannabis market
- impact of legalization and regulation of cannabis on access to cannabis for medical purposes
- impacts on Indigenous peoples and communities

- trends and impact of home cultivation of cannabis for non-medical purposes

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is supportive of a public health approach to the legalization and regulation of cannabis to minimize the negative health and social impacts. There are concerns that products with high levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) can cause negative health and social impacts, as well as with products and product packaging designed to appeal to children and youth, which may result in accidental ingestion and risks of overconsumption. There are also concerns about an increase in accidental poisonings since the legalization of edibles, especially among children, and youth's consumption of synthetic cannabinoids and vaping. Furthermore, access to misinformation, and the lack of coordinated access to mental health, substance use health and treatment services as well as with education and awareness to support informed choices remains concerning.

The submission, outlined in Document 1, was prepared considering the available health evidence and lessons learned from regulating other substances. The submission was shared with the Kids Come First Health Team's *Mental Health, Addictions and Substance use Health* Committee for their review and input. OPH is appreciative of their review and support of the recommendations outlined in the submission.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

To inform the development of the Medical Officer of Health's submission, OPH consulted the Kids Come First Health Team's *Mental Health, Addictions and Substance use Health* Committee.

No public consultation was undertaken in preparing this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments associated with this report's recommendation.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

This report supports the OPH's 2019 – 2022 Strategy, *Protecting Our Community's Health*, with respect to promoting mental health and reducing health and social harms of substance use and influence the social and physical environments that support health and well-being.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Medical Officer of Health's submission to the Government of Canada in response to the consultation on the legalization and regulation of cannabis in Canada

DISPOSITION

This report is presented to the Board for approval of the recommendations outlined in the supporting document. Following Board approval, OPH staff will send its written submission to the Government of Canada.

OPH will continue to monitor cannabis regulations at all levels of government and report back as needed.