

MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE



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TO: Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Public Health Unit

DESTINATAIRE : Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la Ville d'Ottawa

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**SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF RECENT PROVINCIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS WITH
POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

**OBJET : APERÇU DES RÉCENTES ANNONCES DU GOUVERNEMENT
PROVINCIAL QUI AURONT DES RÉPERCUSSIONS ÉVENTUELLES SUR LA SANTÉ
PUBLIQUE**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board of Health with an overview of recent provincial announcements with direct or potential public health implications and Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) response to same.

BACKGROUND

Since taking office on June 29, 2018, the new Ontario Government has announced several policy and operational initiatives that have implications for public health. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Board members with an update on these initiatives.

Immunization of School Pupils Act

Amendments to *Ontario Regulation 645* under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* (ISPA) would have required health care providers in Ontario to report to the local medical officer of health, immunizations administered to all children for the designated diseases specified. The implementation of these regulations was paused on June 29, 2018 by Order in Council, pending consultation.

Pending additional information from the Province, OPH will continue to receive immunization information for children and youth directly from parents or guardians, in compliance with the ISPA legislation. OPH will also continue to communicate with parents via media, letters, physicians and school boards to remind them of their responsibilities and the methods for reporting, which include on-line and via a mobile phone application *CANImmunize*.

Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 (SFOA)

In spring 2017, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) announced the modernization of Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, which intended to respond to the changing landscape of tobacco and vapour products. In spring 2018, OPH submitted recommendations to the provincial consultation, which the Board of Health formally adopted in April 2018 through the report titled [Acting Medical Officer of Health Submissions to Proposed Provincial Regulations Under the Smoke Free Ontario Act, 2017 and Cannabis Act, 2017.](#)

Implementation of this new legislative regime was paused on June 29, 2018 by Order in Council, pending consultation.

In the interim, the current provisions in the *Smoke Free Ontario Act* and the *Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015* remain in effect and continue to be enforced. Accordingly, OPH will

continue to raise awareness of the harms associated with vaping, specifically for youth, ensuring that our health promotion messaging is evidence-informed and that harm reduction is integrated into our overall approach.

Legalization of non-medical cannabis

The Board of Health received OPH's plan to reduce the harms from cannabis use on February 7, 2018 in the report titled, [Preparing for the legalization of non-medical cannabis](#).

On August 13, 2018, the Province announced changes to how cannabis will be sold in Ontario. Starting October 17, cannabis will be sold through the Ontario Cannabis Store website only, with privately-run storefronts to open by April 1, 2019. The government will be consulting with organizations and stakeholders to inform the regulatory framework for the private cannabis stores. The province is also proposing a one-time option for municipalities to opt-out of permitting cannabis stores within their jurisdictions. On August 29, 2018 City Council directed staff to conduct consultations that will specifically include OPH input, to be prepared for presentation to the new Council.

OPH's plan aims to prevent cannabis use, particularly among youth, encourage low-risk use, support users wanting to reduce or quit, and protect others from the second-hand effects. The plan has four priority areas that are based on the spectrum of substance use:

- 1) Population-based health promotion and prevention;
- 2) Health protection;
- 3) Early Identification and treatment; and
- 4) Surveillance.

Between February and August 2018, OPH completed the following activities under the four-point cannabis plan:

Population-Based Health Promotion and Prevention

- Collaborated with the four Ottawa school boards and school-based partners to provide cannabis information sessions to parents. Six events reached nearly 400 parents in total through the live events and over 4,000 views of the recorded presentation online

- Provided capacity building sessions to 170 intermediaries who work with youth and to 64 intermediaries who work with pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Provided cannabis education to almost 400 festival staff and volunteers
- Launched public awareness campaigns to support parents, youth and young adults to make evidence-informed decisions about cannabis use
- Developed a harm reduction resource for young adults in partnership with all four local post-secondary campuses – Algonquin, Carleton, La Cite Collegial and University of Ottawa. The resources were included in the packages provided to first year students and will be available on-campus
- Increased cannabis-related knowledge amongst public health staff, specifically staff working with high-risk individuals, including knowledge of the upcoming legislation and the low-risk cannabis use guidelines

Over the next few months, OPH will focus on the following initiatives:

Population-Based Health Promotion and Prevention

- Implementing targeted education strategies for intermediaries who work with youth, health care providers and parents

Health Protection

- Providing education to landlords on smoke-free policies
- Monitoring changes to provincial regulations (SFOA and cannabis retail framework) and acting on opportunities to provide input
- Monitoring for and acting on opportunities to provide input into the federal regulation of edibles (expected by 2019)

Early Identification and Treatment

- Collaborating with partners to promote mental health and addiction resources for people who may need help with their cannabis use.

Surveillance

- Collating baseline local data on cannabis and health outcomes

- Exploring opportunities to monitor anticipated changes in patterns, behaviours and outcomes related to cannabis use, in collaboration with relevant partners.

Review of Safe Consumption and Overdose Prevention Sites

OPH operates one of four Supervised Consumption Services (SCS) in Ottawa. OPH continues to offer SCS at 179 Clarence Street and to provide counselling and referral services to clients, serving as a bridge to other substance use and treatment services as well as various social service supports.

On July 24, 2018, the Province announced that it was reviewing evidence with respect to the merit of safe injection and overdose prevention sites. OPH has been in discussion with provincial officials and will continue to provide evidence and data with respect to the merits of supervised consumption and overdose prevention services.

Health and Physical Education Curriculum

On August 22, 2018, the Province announced an Ontario-wide consultation on education and curriculum matters as follows:

- How to improve student performance in the STEM disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math;
- How our schools are preparing students with needed job skills, whether it be by exposing them to opportunities in the skilled trades or giving them the opportunity to improve their skills in increasingly important fields like coding;
- What more can be done to ensure students graduate with important life skills like financial literacy;
- How to build a new age-appropriate Health and Physical Education curriculum that includes subjects like mental health, sexual health education, and legalization of cannabis;
- What measures can be taken to improve standardized testing; and,
- What steps schools should take to ban cellphone use in the classroom.

As some of these topics have public health implications, OPH will monitor these consultations and make submissions as appropriate. In the interim, OPH will continue to support local schools and school boards, providing health education to their classrooms

and building capacity of their staff in accordance with the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Social Assistance Reform and Cancellation of the Ontario Basic Income Pilot

On July 31, 2018, the Province announced that Ontario was working on a plan to reform Social Assistance. As part of this announcement, the government advised that in the intermediate term, the government would provide current Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients with an across-the-board 1.5 per cent increase in support rates to help them with a higher cost of living. It was also announced that the Province would be winding down Ontario's Basic Income research project.

Because Ottawa was not one of the communities selected for the Basic Income research project, OPH is not directly affected by its winding down. That said, OPH will monitor developments on this matter and make submissions as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

OPH will continue to monitor developments on all of these files, look for opportunities to provide input, such as evidence in support of programs and policies that protect public health, and report to the Board of Health as appropriate.

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