



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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September 8, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairpersons and Directors of Education
FROM: Stephen Andrews, Director of Legislative and Political Affairs
SUBJECT: Ontario's Approach to Cannabis Regulation

Overview:

On Friday September 8, 2017 the government announced its regulatory approach relating to the use of **recreational cannabis**. The Attorney General indicated that legislation will be introduced later this fall to enable the government to establish its regulatory regime, following the conclusion of province-wide consultations.

As you are aware, this follows the federal government's legislation to legalize and regulate recreational uses of cannabis or bill C-45 (the Cannabis Act) that is working its way through the federal Parliament. In addition, today's announcement by the Ontario government follows stakeholder consultations conducted by the "Cannabis Secretariat" of the Attorney General's Office in July and August, 2017 on a broad range of issues including the sale and distribution of cannabis.

This memorandum provides a summary of the announcement and background on the issues related to government's regulatory framework.

Ontario's governments approach:

Based on background documents, the key objective of the Ontario government's approach to Cannabis legalization is to ensure a "measured and balanced approach focused on protecting youth, maximizing public health and road safety, reducing harm, and shrinking the illegal market". The Provincial regulatory framework seeks to align with the federal framework.

The Regulation of Recreational Cannabis

Minimum Age:

The Ontario government intends to set the minimum age to purchase recreational cannabis at **19 years old**, the same as alcohol and tobacco. This minimum age would also apply to possession and use.

Youth Possession:

The federal government also proposed possession limits for adults and youth. Under the federal proposal, adults would be allowed to have up to 30 grams of dried legal cannabis, while people under 18 years old could have up to five grams.

The province signaled that it intends to prohibit individuals under the age of 19 from possessing or consuming recreational cannabis. The province's proposed approach intends to focus on prevention, diversion, and harm reduction.

Prevention and Harm Reduction:

The province intends to support youth, young adults and other vulnerable populations through the development of a comprehensive prevention and harm reduction approach that promotes awareness of cannabis related health harms. The approach also includes education, health and social service providers that work with, and educate, youth and young adults.

As part of this approach, Ontario intends to:

- Endorse Canada's Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines;
- Explore training and other supports needed to increase capacity among education, health care, youth justice and social service providers to improve prevention and harm reduction efforts.

Permitted locations for the use of Cannabis:

Ontario's proposed approach intends to restrict the legal use of recreational cannabis to private residences. People would not be allowed to consume any form of recreational cannabis in public places, workplaces or when inside a motor vehicle.

The government also indicated that it will continue to consult with municipal partners, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and other organizations to explore the feasibility and implications of introducing designated establishments where recreational cannabis could be consumed.

Dispensaries:

The government states that cannabis dispensaries are not and will not be legal retailers. The province will pursue an enforcement strategy with municipalities, local police services, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the federal government to help shut down these illegal operations.

Enforcement:

The government intends to convene an “enforcement summit” with policing partners, public health experts and other stakeholders. The summit will identify resources to address illegal storefront sales, proposed provincial offences, enforcement gaps, coordination or collaboration opportunities and associated resource requirements to promote community safety.

The province will also introduce new measures to address drug-impaired driving later this fall.

Workplace Safety:

The government also intends to develop an integrated awareness campaign related to workplace safety. The province intends to develop resources to guide employers, labour groups and others as they manage workplace safety issues related to impairment at work through education and awareness initiatives.

Role of the Ministry of Education:

In April 2017, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Leadership and Learning Division sent a memorandum to all Directors of Education. It mentioned that it is working with an intergovernmental committee, including the Attorney General, to address the public health impacts of cannabis legalization (see attached April 19, 2017 Memorandum). It also notes that the Ministry will ensure vulnerable students are protected and the Ministry is considering any changes to the curriculum and board policies that may be required. During the late summer consultations, the MOE indicated to OCSTA that it would hold its own consultations with education partners. To date, the Ministry has not scheduled any consultations with its education partners.

Next Steps in the Cannabis Regulatory Development Process:

The government signed that it intends to continue to consult with stakeholders in various sectors over the coming months as it develops the legislative and regulatory framework in respect of recreational cannabis. OCSTA will work with the Ministry of Education on the education part of the regulatory framework and develop a legislative submission outlining Catholic school boards concerns with the proposed overall framework.

If you have any questions, please contact Stephen Andrews at sandrews@ocsta.on.ca.

Attachments