



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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October 10, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairpersons and Directors of Education
- All Catholic District School Boards

FROM: Stephen Andrews, Director of Legislative and Political Affairs

SUBJECT: Cannabis Regulation: Ministry of Education Consultations

Further to my memorandum of September 8, 2017, OCSTA representatives met with senior officials in the Ministry of Education to discuss their work in respect of recreational cannabis use and the impacts on Catholic school boards. This memorandum provides highlights of the meeting.

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, depending on provincial rules.

The Ministry informed us that the Ontario government will reduce possession and sharing limits of cannabis to zero from the original 5 grams amount. This means that youth under 18 years in possession of or sharing any amount of cannabis will be subject to Youth Penalties under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Ministry of Education Goal

- To prevent and/or delay cannabis use among youth and promote healthy decision-making and student safety.

Key Priorities of the Ministry of Education

- Provide new, targeted resources to specific groups including:
 - Reliable information to students to make informed decisions on the impacts of cannabis use (cognitive impairments, relationship issues, benefits of abstinence)
 - Support for parents - information on prevention, healthy decision-making

- Supports for education sector to assist students and their families on the impacts of cannabis use.
- Use the best available research and evidence to inform decision making and engage in ongoing data monitoring.

Ministry of Education Consultation/Engagement Plans

The Ministry plans to launch in the later fall a targeted set of meetings with key education and public health stakeholders. These groups will include: trustee associations, parent groups, Indigenous stakeholders, local mental health agencies and various advisory bodies to the Ministry. This part of the process will continue throughout the winter of 2018.

In addition, the Ministry will expand the mandates of the Healthy Schools Working Table and potentially host a parent involvement committee conference on the cannabis issue to gain feedback and insight into the issues impacting school boards.

Possible Areas of Discussion

- Impact of legislation on the school community including roles and responsibilities
- Reliable information for students and families
- Supports needed for school board staff to assist students and families related to cannabis use
- Parental awareness in supporting children to make healthy choices
- Supports for vulnerable youth—Indigenous, racialized, low economic status that may be at higher risk to develop cannabis dependency.

Next Steps

The Ministry will continue to work the Attorney General’s Cannabis Secretariat to finalize the proposed regulatory and legislative framework governing recreational cannabis use. It is also finalizing some aspects of its consultation plan with education stakeholders and reviewing part of the Education Act that will require minor amendments to reflect the necessary changes implied by overall cannabis legalization framework.

The Ministry is now in the process of developing and updating resources and materials to the education sector in anticipation of the implementation of the cannabis legalization framework in July 2018.

OCSTA will continue to liaison with the Ministry of Education and update Directors and Chairs as required. OCSTA will continue to draft a submission on the issues and concerns of boards.

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