



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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September 19, 2017

To: Debbie Thompson, Safe and Healthy Schools, Ministry of Education
Sharon Weller, Safe and Healthy Schools, Ministry of Education
Tiffany Blair, Minister of Education's Office

Thank you very much for attending our joint meeting of OPSBA's Education Program and Policy Development Work Teams on Friday, September 8, 2017. Your session was timely as the school year had just begun and trustees will be attending their local September board meetings. As well, some of the work team members will be attending our Board of Directors' meeting at the end of the month at which this topic will be discussed. It was also timely given the announcement that same morning regarding the retail approach to selling non-medical cannabis. We appreciated your overview of what has taken place federally and what is planned provincially in terms of the introduction of Ontario's own legislation and sector engagement.

As an Association, this is an issue we have been following prior to and after the introduction of the federal legislation in April. Information was provided to our membership about the online public consultation and the summer stakeholder session that OPSBA senior staff attended. We also shared with our members the April 19, 2017 memo entitled, "Legalization of Cannabis – Supports for Schools" that included a Q&A about how students might learn about cannabis in schools (curriculum) and various resources for parents and principals. These are important and welcomed opportunities but we share the concern of many about the short timelines for legalization, which is to be completed by July 2018.

Your presentation also included the assurance of a fall consultation in which OPSBA could participate. This would be a chance for us to discuss education issues such as changes to board policies and procedures, updating curriculum (age/grade information), updating *Education Act* language regarding suspensions and expulsions, and Association input on public awareness and youth/young adult harm reduction etc. We look forward to learning more details about opportunities to contribute to the implementation plan.

Our committee members had a number of initial comments and questions that we wanted to share. These included:

- There is concern about retail outlets being too close to schools. What kind of consultation has been done on this issue? We understand the LCBO has an existing policy and it is expected that cannabis regulations will be the same or stronger, but we want to be involved in this discussion.
- There should be strong education on the links between mental health and cannabis consumption. What have we learned from locations that have already legalized cannabis? We support efforts that will emphasize harm reduction, early intervention and education.
- Concern that there has not been enough research on the societal impacts of legalizing cannabis consumption.

- What kind of research is being done around young adult use of marijuana for medical reasons? The research says it has an impact on brain development. We know there are adverse effects.
- How will the Ministry assist boards in promoting well-being in relation to this announcement?
- How will the Ministry engage the sector to review and amend the Police School Board Protocol to ensure clarity as to when principals should be calling the police about cannabis possession within schools?
- This is not a “schools-only” responsibility, but a shared responsibility.
- Additional supports will be needed for students and parents, as well as training and resources to support school boards, teachers, principals and trustees.
- This is also an issue the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) is discussing among members and there may be opportunities to share approaches and resources.

Again, thank you for attending our meeting and we look forward to learning about next steps, timing and opportunities for education sector engagement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie French". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurie French
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association