



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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Ministry of the Attorney General
Policy Division
Legalization of Cannabis Branch
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In early February, the government announced a consultation on the potential implementation of additional cannabis business opportunities in the future, including:

- facilitating the sale of cannabis for consumption in establishments like lounges and cafes (cannabis consumption establishments); and,
- cannabis special occasion permits (SOPs).

The legalization of recreational cannabis in Ontario is an issue that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has been involved with for several years and our past commentary can be found on our [website](#). As an educational stakeholder, our mandate is ensuring student achievement and well-being and as such, our comments focus on the implications of the sale and consumption of cannabis among children and youth. Our primary concern remains the impact of cannabis on youth brain development and the need for evidence-based research.

If the government was to facilitate the sale of cannabis for consumption in establishments like lounges and cafes, there must be regular communication and discussion among municipal partners, including school boards, about potential locations. We respectfully ask that school boards be part of any consultation and final decisions. Similar to our recommendations for retail locations, we suggest a distance "buffer" between these establishments and local schools.

We continue to support the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario providing more than 15 days for the public to comment on proposed locations and suggest there be clear communication and outreach to those communities. The communications should be delivered in multiple forms, including social media, and in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity.

While we do not have an opinion on the products that would be for sale in lounges and cafes, we are calling for a public awareness campaign that would be represented through required resources in each location, to support this adjustment with clear information about what is permitted, by whom and where. The campaign should include an educational component that increases overall awareness of recreational cannabis and preventing substance abuse among our youth. We would also request any public campaign and education resources include and address the increasing use of vapor products and e-cigarettes among youth.

We want to stress that mental health and addictions are a serious challenge in our country and school boards see this first hand in many of our students. Public awareness campaigns need to include evidence-based research regarding neurotoxic effects on adolescent brain development and the link to regular cannabis use.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments, which will also be shared with the Ministry of Education.

Sincerely,

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

Cathy Abraham
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc.
The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister (Education)

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents English public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve more than 1.3 million public elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA is seen as the credible voice of public education in Ontario and is routinely called on by the provincial government for input and advice on legislation and the impact of government policy directions.