



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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Cathy Abraham
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Thursday, October 11, 2018

To: Nina Tangri, MPP (Mississauga—Streetsville) and Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Policy
Eric Rennie, Clerk of the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Re: OPSBA's Submission re: Bill 36, Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Bill 36, Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018 and notes that a previous submission was made in November 2017 regarding Bill 174, Cannabis, Smoke-Free Ontario and Road Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017. This new legislation offers several amendments mainly concerning the revised retail structure for recreational cannabis and vapour products in Ontario, the authorization of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) to grant licenses and changes to the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*. We would like to address and highlight the concerns we have with respect to the education sector which includes our students, teachers, parents, employees and school communities.

In regards to the implementation of a new retail structure, we have been working with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) to request that there be regular communication among municipal partners about potential locations. Bill 36 refers to a regulation to determine a distance "buffer" between cannabis retail store locations and schools. We respectfully ask that school boards be part of any consultation for this regulation. A set distance amount between retail sites and schools could not be applied universally as the geography of school locations is vastly different across the province. Within our association there are huge discrepancies between schools and centres that might accommodate these new retail locations. We also support that the legislation ensure First Nations communities are provided with a similar opportunity to have input into cannabis retail within their communities.

The proposed legislation also includes the allowance of "no caps" on the maximum number of retail sites within a municipality. We believe local discussion is important and recommend decisions to be based on local stakeholder agreement that makes sense to each community. We are supportive of the AGCO providing 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.

The legislation states that municipalities will have until January 22, 2019, to opt out of having any retail sites within their jurisdiction. The upcoming Municipal and School Board election on October 22, 2018, may have an impact on these local discussions. The new term for both councillors and trustees begins on December 1, giving limited time for new boards and councils to meet and make recommendations. We suggest the deadline of January 22 be extended at least a month to allow for more consultation and thoughtful decision making.

An additional area that remains a concern is the allowance of using cannabis in public spaces and the exposure to second-hand smoke. The Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act proposes to change the rules around the public consumption of cannabis to align it with the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*. This would now allow cannabis to be consumed anywhere where smoking is allowed, but still prohibit it in schools (and outdoor property used by a school), playgrounds and child care centres. We support these restrictions and the restriction of smoking within 20 metres of a playground or sport field/space. However, with the new alignment changes, how would public consumption be enforced consistently? At only 20 metres, individuals could legally smoke cannabis relatively close to schools and their property. Our members suggest this be increased as it is a short distance in which second-hand smoke could easily travel and affect others. Municipalities do have the ability to enact bylaws restricting smoking in other outdoor spaces and we again suggest this too should be a local decision among municipal partners.

One other issue that was brought to our attention was the location of cannabis production facilities and their proximity to schools. We need to ensure proper security and distance measures are in place to ensure student and staff safely.

As we move closer to October 17, 2018, all Ontarians/Canadians will be adjusting to the new reality of legalization. We have been calling for a public awareness campaign to support this adjustment with clear information about what is permitted, by whom and where. The campaign needs to include an education component that increases overall awareness of recreational cannabis and preventing substance abuse among our youth. For those of us in the education sector, we are looking for the next phase of supports. Last May, school boards received fact sheets for youth/parents/caregivers and educators, as well as a youth resource that contained information about harm reduction and the risks of cannabis use/misuse. We are waiting for the additional resources and supports that are to be released post-legalization and are to include targeted materials for mental health professionals in schools. We would also request any public campaign and education resources include and address the increasing use of vapor products and e-cigarettes among youth.

Finally, we realize this is a funding channel for municipalities and although revenue amounts will not be known for some time, we strongly recommend consideration be given to diverting a portion of profits, or a percentage of taxation, to public awareness, prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

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

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents 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.