

March 30, 2020

Alexander Bishop, Director
Legalization of Cannabis Branch
Policy Division, Ministry of the Attorney General
720 Bay Street, 11th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2S9

Dear Director Bishop:

Re: 20-MAG001, Cannabis Consumption Establishments / Special Occasion Permits

On behalf of the Board of Health at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU), I am writing in support of ALPHA's letter dated February 27, 2020 and the concerns expressed re: 20-MAG001, Cannabis Consumption Establishments / Special Occasion Permits.

Currently there is a lack of research to support the opening cannabis consumption establishments or issuing special event permits. Also lacking is evidence to outline the long-term impacts of normalizing cannabis use.

Presently, individuals in Ontario are permitted to possess and consume cannabis in many public and private spaces; therefore, cannabis cafes, lounges and special event permits are not required at this time. Allowing cannabis consumption establishments and special occasion permits would contribute to the normalization of cannabis use and has been demonstrated with alcohol use in our society, normalization results in proliferation of usage which increases health and social harms.

Potential harms from use and normalization of cannabis could include risks of public/over-intoxication, increased impaired driving, potential for falls and other injuries, issues of liability, enforcement issues and ultimately potential for increased hospital ER visits and hospitalizations. Any of these harms would result in increased societal and health costs.

The SMDHU Board of Health also supports ALPHA's request for assurance that there will be no changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act regime as part of this consultation.

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Since legalization of cannabis is very recent and the retail market is still expanding, it would be prudent for the government to monitor and assess the impact of these regulatory changes before considering or allowing any further expansion.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Anita Dubeau, Chair
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health

AD:CS:cm

Encl. (1)

cc. Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health
Ontario Public Health Association
Local Members of Provincial Parliament in Simcoe Muskoka
Municipal Councils in Simcoe Muskoka

alPHa's members are
the public health units
in Ontario.

alPHa Sections:

Boards of Health
Section

Council of Ontario
Medical Officers of
Health (COMOH)

**Affiliate
Organizations:**

Association of Ontario
Public Health Business
Administrators

Association of
Public Health
Epidemiologists
in Ontario

Association of
Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of
Ontario

Health Promotion
Ontario

Ontario Association of
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of
Public Health Nursing
Leaders

Ontario Dietitians in
Public Health

February 27, 2020

Alexander Bishop, Director
Legalization of Cannabis Branch
Policy Division, Ministry of the Attorney General
720 Bay Street, 11th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2S9

Re: 20-MAG001, Cannabis Consumption Establishments / Special Occasion Permits

On behalf of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and its member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations, I am writing today to express our concerns about the consideration of permitting cannabis consumption establishments and issuing special occasion permits analogous to those issued for alcohol in Ontario.

We appreciate the note on the Regulatory Registry that changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) 2017 are not being considered as part of this consultation, but would appreciate assurances that there will be no loosening of any of the regulatory restrictions that protect Ontarians from second-hand smoke in public places in any circumstance.

The SFOA's added protections from exposure to cannabis smoke in enclosed spaces are based on the known and significant health risks of inhaling smoke of any kind. We would view any motion towards considering exemptions for combustible or vapourized cannabis in any enclosed public place as an unacceptable step backwards.

Irrespective of whether this proposal is intended to exclude combustible or vapourized cannabis, it also amplifies our concerns about the ongoing liberalization and normalization of the use of harmful substances without proper consideration of their health consequences. Retail expansion of alcohol sales, unrestricted promotion of e-cigarettes and proposals such as this one are concrete examples of the government's willingness to expand the markets for these substances without developing offsetting health promotion policies to mitigate their measurable negative health and social impacts.

We look forward to providing further input to this process as it develops to ensure that these impacts are carefully considered alongside the economic drivers. In the meantime, we are again asking for assurances that there will be no reversal of any of the SFOA prohibitions on smoking or vaping in public places at any time in the future. We are also asking that provincial strategies be considered to clearly communicate the health hazards associated with cannabis consumption in general and implement measures to mitigate them.

We hope that you will take these requests into careful consideration and we would be pleased to discuss them with you further. To schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, alPHa, at loretta@alphaweb.org or 416-595-0006 x 222.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carmen McGregor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carmen" and last name "McGregor" clearly distinguishable.

Carmen McGregor,
alPHA President

COPY: Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) is a not-for-profit organization that provides leadership to the boards of health and public health units in Ontario. alPHA advises and lends expertise to members on the governance, administration and management of health units. The Association also collaborates with governments and other health organizations, advocating for a strong, effective and efficient public health system in the province. Through policy analysis, discussion, collaboration, and advocacy, alPHA's members and staff act to promote public health policies that form a strong foundation for the improvement of health promotion and protection, disease prevention and surveillance services in all of Ontario's communities.