

February 3, 2017

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Hepburn Block, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins:

**Marijuana controls under Bill 178, Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016**

On January 19, 2017, at a regular meeting of the Board of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, Administration brought forward a letter supported by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit regarding the inclusion of Marijuana as a prescribed product or substance under Bill 178, Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016.

The Windsor-Essex County Board of Health supports the position of Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit recommending the enactment of the Smoke-free Ontario Amendment Act which received Royal Assent on June 9, 2016, as well as their suggestion to include medicinal and recreational marijuana as a prescribed substance within the regulations. By utilizing the strong framework set forth in the Smoke-free Ontario Strategy, the provincial government will take advantage of an established and effective means to address the risks associated with the use of these products using the three pillar approach of prevention, protection, and cessation.

As a result, the risks associated with increased uptake of marijuana will be mitigated through appropriate and consistent regulation, and exposure to smoking behaviour in public spaces will be minimized. Increased access to marijuana poses a significant public health concern with the most notable negative outcomes tied to impaired driving, exacerbation of mental illness and addictions, and potential harms to the children of pregnant or lactating women. First and second-hand marijuana smoke also contains known carcinogens and exposure to either can lead to respiratory or cardiovascular disease.

The Windsor-Essex County Board of Health applauds the efforts of the Ontario Government in the development of the Smoke-free Ontario Amendment Act, and the inclusion of marijuana as a prescribed substance is a practical and feasible means through which to lessen the potentially negative public health impacts of legalization. Should this approach be taken, and the enforcement behaviours fall within the scope of Ontario public health units, it is further recommended that sustainable funding and tailored enforcement training be provided.

Lastly, it is recommended that the above-mentioned protections are expanded into the Electronic Cigarettes Act, where the prohibitions related to use in public spaces have yet to be enacted. The vaping of medicinal and recreational marijuana, in any form, also represents a concern related to exposure to smoking behaviour and the unintended inhalation of second-hand smoke.

Sincerely,



Gary McNamara  
Chair, Windsor-Essex County Board of Health



Gary M. Kirk, MPH, MD  
CEO & Medical Officer of Health

c: Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario  
Association of Local Public Health Agency  
Ontario Public Health Association  
Cheryl Hardcastle, MP Windsor-Tecumseh  
Brian Masse, MP Windsor-West  
Tracey Ramsey, MP Essex  
Dave Van Kesteren, MP Chatham-Kent — Leamington  
Percy Hatfield, MPP Windsor-Tecumseh  
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Taras Natyshak, MPP Essex  
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Ontario Boards of Health  
Windsor-Essex County Board of Health