

September 13, 2017

Dear OMSA Members,

The Ontario Political Advocacy Committee is the **political advocacy and parliamentary engagement body** of the Ontario Medical Students Association. Our goal is to engage in the provincial decision-making process to advocate for health policies, systems, and care delivery models that will benefit both Ontario medical students and the people we serve. OPAC aims to provide updates on emerging policy issues for students, and the following is the first for this academic year:

On April 13, 2017, the Government of Canada introduced the [Cannabis Act](#), which aims to legalize recreational cannabis across the country. Public debate regarding how to regulate the sale and availability of cannabis is ongoing, while the implementation of the Cannabis Act will largely be a provincial responsibility.

With the current legalization date set for July 2018, the Government of Ontario held a public consultation period this summer, likely aiming to pass its legal regulations over the next few months. **The Ontario Medical Association recently sent out an email to its members containing its Recommendations to the Ministry of the Attorney General on Recreational Cannabis Consultation, in addition to a survey for members to comment on their proposed recommendations.**

The legalization of cannabis has many implications for patient and public safety and is therefore an issue of concern for OMSA. We are committed to advocating for physical environments that are safe and health-promoting for all Ontarians, and we encourage you as a future healthcare provider to learn about judicious, evidence-based approaches to cannabis legalization.

We have summarized a few key points and included links regarding recreational cannabis regulation, from the perspectives of the Canadian and Ontario governments, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Ontario Medical Association (proposed):

1. The federal *Cannabis Act* (Bill C-45) will allow for the possession (of up to 30 grams) and use of marijuana by individuals over 18. Provinces will be able to further restrict these laws and govern how marijuana will be sold. The bill has passed its second reading but is not yet law, but is expected to come into force by July 2018. The legislation is currently being reviewed by the Standing Committee on Health.

[Government Bill: C-45 \(The Cannabis Act\)](#)

2. The Ontario government has now ended its public consultation but has yet to introduce legislation on cannabis. However, the government has released information highlighting policies that they are likely to include in their proposed regulations, which include: a minimum age of 19, the prohibition of use in public places, and cannabis sales exclusively through standalone stores run by the LCBO.

[September 8 news release on a framework for cannabis legislation](#)
[Backgrounder: Ontario's Plan to Regulate Legalized Cannabis](#)
[Consultation paper: Cannabis legalization in Ontario](#)

3. The Canadian Medical Association prepared a submission to the federal government regarding access to marijuana, which included recommending: piloting legalization prior to a national roll-out and a phased implementation approach; a minimum age of 21, with greater restrictions on individuals under 25; a national minimum age; and a prohibition of home cultivation for non-medical use.

[CMA Submission: Legalization, Regulation and Restriction of Access to Marijuana](#)

4. Last week, Ontario Medical Association released a draft statement to members which included five key recommendations:
 - o a minimum age of 21 (an effort to balance medical concerns while discouraging illegal drug use)
 - o harsh penalties for violating age of sale rules
 - o the sale of cannabis exclusively through a government corporation
 - o if legalized, specialized lounges should also be supplied exclusively through a government corporation
 - o staff at cannabis stores should be properly trained

[OMA's draft recommendations on recreational cannabis](#) (requires OMA login)

There is a consultation survey **due September 19th** from the OMA that you can complete to input your perspective on its recommendations to the government. The link has previously been emailed to you and is accessible to all OMSA members who are also OMA members.

We encourage all OMSA members to complete the OMA survey to actively provide your perspective on cannabis legalization and its appropriate regulation. If you have feedback to share on cannabis regulation but are not an OMA member, would like more information, or would like to become involved with the Ontario Political Advocacy Committee, please contact Vivian Tam at representation@omsa.ca, or your local VP External.

Sincerely,



Vivian Tam
Ontario Medical Students Association
Director of Representation

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