
MEMORANDUM

PHD-C 07-2019

Subject: Cannabis Legalization Update
Date: December 3, 2019
To: Public Health and Social Services Committee
**From: Renata Faber, Manager, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention and
Diana Teng, Manager, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention**

Report PHD 01-2019 Cannabis Legalization recommended that staff return with an update on the impacts of legalization in Q4 of 2019. Highlights are shared in this memo with a more fulsome report planned for 2020 when the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) results are released.

Regional By-law

Regional By-law 112-2013, a regional by-law to protect children and vulnerable persons from exposure to outdoor second-hand smoke was updated on August 1, 2019 to protect the community from exposure to second-hand smoke and aerosol from e-cigarettes, to enhance efforts at denormalizing smoking and using e-cigarettes, and to support efforts to quit. A collaborative effort by all 12 municipalities, new prohibited locations included in the by-law are

- Anywhere within nine metres of an entrance or exit of a publically accessible place, building or workplace
- Beaches
- Recreational trails

Since approval of the bylaw, Public Health has been educating the public about these changes through face-to-face contact, social media, and multiple traditional media channels.

Between the dates of August 1, 2019 to November 11, 2019, Public Health's Tobacco Hotline received

- 15 by-law inquiries
- 25 by-law complaints
- 123 requests for signage

The volume of inquiries, complaints, and signage have increased compared to 2018, but is consistent with past experiences after bylaw changes. Signage, including decals for no smoking, no vaping, and no cannabis are available and can be ordered through the Niagara Region website.

Acute Lung Injury

An investigation into acute lung injury related to e-cigarette use has been ongoing in the United States and Canada. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on November 5, 2019 reported 2,051 cases, with 39 confirmed deaths from lung injury related to e-cigarette use. Of these cases, 70% of patients are male and 79% of patients are under 35 years old. THC-containing products (i.e. cannabis-based products) are involved in most, but not all of the illnesses. Vitamin E Acetate has been implicated as a chemical of interest, based on samples from the lung fluid of a small number of cases. In Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) on November 6, 2019 reported two confirmed cases in Quebec, two probable cases in New Brunswick, three probable case in British Columbia.

Local E-cigarette Use

The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) in 2017 found 21.6% of students Grades 7 to 12, in Ontario have ever used an e-cigarette product. We anticipate receiving updated use rates for Niagara students in Q3 of 2020 through OSDUHS. The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* prohibits the use e-cigarettes on school property; between January 1, 2019 and November 11, 2019, Public Health conducted 239 inspections at secondary schools and provided one-on-one education to youth 182 times. Tobacco Control Officers issued the following for use of e-cigarettes on school property: 106 warnings, 37 tickets, and 25 summons to court.

E-cigarettes are not without risk. Public Health continues to recommend that if one is not currently a smoker, one should not start using e-cigarette products, especially not youth or pregnant women. If one currently uses e-cigarettes, one should not obtain them from illegal/unregulated sources, nor modify or add substances to them. However, Public Health currently does not advise smokers who are using e-cigarettes to quit smoking to return to smoking cigarettes.

Cannabis Edibles

On October 17, 2019, cannabis edibles became legal in Canada. They will be available for purchase by the end of 2019. Public Health is working to ensure that residents understand the risks and ways to minimize harm if choosing to consume edibles. Several key messages in the comprehensive print and social media education plan include:

- It can take up to four hours to feel the full effects of edible cannabis. Consuming more within this time-period can result in overconsumption and adverse effects that may require medical attention.

- Delay using cannabis until later in life. Teenagers and young adults have greater risk from consuming cannabis because the brain continues to develop until around the age of 25.
- Avoid smoking cannabis. The smoke from cannabis contains the same harmful chemicals as tobacco smoke.
- Avoid frequent use. Frequent and prolonged use increases the risk of dependence and may bring on or worsen disorders related to anxiety and depression.
- Store all cannabis products safely by keeping them out of reach of children, youth and pets

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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