

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

APR 23 2015

His Worship Gregor Robertson
Mayor of the City of Vancouver
3rd Floor, City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia V5Y 1V4

Dear Mr. Mayor:

I am deeply concerned by reports that the City of Vancouver intends to discuss a proposal to regulate illegal drug dispensaries at an upcoming Council meeting.

Marijuana is not an approved drug or medicine, and Health Canada does not endorse its use. There are serious health risks associated with smoking marijuana, especially for youth. That is why the Government of Canada wants to stop youth from smoking marijuana. The evidence is clear that when youth smoke marijuana they have increased risks of developing mental health issues, including psychosis and schizophrenia. We also know that regular, long-term marijuana use in youth can harm concentration, memory, and the ability to think and to make decisions, and it can also produce paranoia and anxiety or nervousness.

Legitimizing and normalizing the use and sale of marijuana can have only one effect: increasing marijuana use and addiction. Indeed, according to the Canadian Drug Use Monitoring Survey, although youth marijuana use has dropped by almost 45 percent since 2004, 20 percent of youth smoked marijuana in 2012 compared to 70 percent who drank alcohol. Legitimizing and normalizing marijuana could mean more than tripling its use by youth.

While Canadian courts have required the government to allow access to marijuana when authorized by a physician, the law is clear that this must be done in a controlled fashion to protect public health and safety. In response to

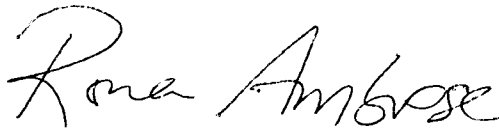
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the courts, the government implemented the *Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations* (MMPR) in June 2013, with the aim of treating dried marijuana as much as possible like other narcotics used for medical purposes. Additional information regarding the MMPR is available on Health Canada's website at <http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/mma>.

These Regulations are clear and do not provide municipalities with the authority to legitimize the commercial sale of marijuana, which remains an illegal substance. Storefronts and dispensaries do not operate within a "grey zone," and the law is clear: they are illegal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rona Ambrose". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

The Hon. Rona Ambrose, P.C., M.P.