

December 5, 2016

Chair and Members
Toronto Board of Health

Re: Dispensing medical marijuana in pharmacies

In Toronto, our police are struggling to manage the real danger of illegal dispensaries. As more and more of these criminal operations open, patients and residents are increasingly confused and put at risk.

While the federal government grapples with how best to regulate recreational marijuana, it is critical that the thousands of medical marijuana users have improved access to their medication in an environment that is formal, regulated and patient focused.

The immediate need for reform in terms of medical marijuana is made more pressing by the fact that based on its current timeline, the federal government will not have a new system in place until 2018 at the earliest.

According to Statistics Canada, over 400, 000 Canadians use cannabis for medical and, not recreational purposes. However, it has been reported that fewer than 10% of Canadians who use medical marijuana today obtain it through legal channels.

Further, we know that Canadians are strongly in favour of accessing medical marijuana through pharmacies. A February 2016 Abacus Data survey found that 73% of respondents agree that medical marijuana should be treated like other medicines and be available through a pharmacy. This is why I am recommending that:

The Board of Health recommend to the Federal Minister of Health, Attorney General of Canada, MP Bill Blair and the Task Force on Marijuana Legalization and Regulation to include a review of the medical marijuana system and consider the implications allowing pharmacies to dispense with the intent of providing patients with improved care and safety and providing municipalities, including Toronto, with needed support in addressing issues associated with illegal dispensaries so often posing as legitimate medical operations.

Sincerely,

Christin Carmichael Greb
Councillor, Ward 16, Eglinton-Lawrence