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June 12, 2015

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

From: Councillor Joe Cressy
Chair, Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel

Re: Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

The Council-approved Toronto Drug Strategy (TDS) provides a comprehensive approach to alcohol and other drug issues based on the integrated components of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement. The TDS Implementation Panel is a multi-sectoral leadership group that provides oversight and strategic advice for implementation of this strategy.

At its May 28, 2015 meeting, the Panel discussed the report entitled, *Cannabis Policy Framework*, which was released by the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (CAMH) in the fall of 2014. The Panel also heard a presentation by CAMH staff on the evidence-base and policy rationale for this report. The *Cannabis Policy Framework* supports the legalization and strong regulation of cannabis. Their position is based on the available scientific evidence, and the experience of other jurisdictions.

This is an important health policy issue for our community given the high prevalence of cannabis use among youth and adults. The Toronto Public Health Student Survey found 13% of youth in the survey reported cannabis use during the previous year.ⁱ Further, 16% of the grade 11/12 students used cannabis once a month or more. Rates are similar for adults. The CAMH Monitor, which is the longest ongoing survey of adult substance use in Canada, found 14% of adults surveyed in Toronto reported cannabis use in the past year; 42.6% reported use of cannabis during their lifetime.ⁱⁱ

There is growing consensus that the current criminalization approach to cannabis is not working, and that we should be looking at a public health approach to better manage the harms of cannabis use. This view is supported by health organizations, including the Canadian Public Health Association.

The TDS Implementation Panel therefore requests the Board of Health to ask the Medical Officer of Health to report to the Board on the legalization and regulation of

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cannabis, taking into account the *CAMH Cannabis Policy Framework* and other related reports, as well as input from the TDS Implementation Panel.

Sincerely,

Joe Cressy
City Councillor
Ward 20, Trinity-Spadina

Endnotes:

ⁱ Toronto Public Health (2014). *Healthy Futures: 2014 Toronto Public Health Student Survey*. Toronto: ON.

ⁱⁱ Ialomiteanu, A.R., Hamilton, H.A., Adlaf, E.M., & Mann, R.E. (2014). *CAMH Monitor eReport: Substance Use, Mental Health and Well-Being Among Ontario Adults, 1977–2013*

(CAMH Research Document Series No. 40). Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.