

Association of Dundas Churches

29 Park St. W., Dundas, ON L9H 1X3

June 2, 2017

Filomena Tassi,

MP Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas

House of Commons

Constituency Office

Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

1686 Main St. W., Hamilton ON L8S 0A2

Dear Filomena

At its meetings on April 27, 2017 and June 1, 2017 the Association of Dundas Churches had some discussion about the proposed legislation to legalize marijuana use in Canada. The June 1, 2017 meeting unanimously directed me to write to you on behalf of the ADC to express some of our concerns.

Some of us have firsthand experience with teens and young adults in our families and congregations for whom recreational marijuana use has proven problematic. This recreational use of marijuana has compromised many in terms of their health and their relationships and their ability to function in community. The effects have been devastating for families and costly to the community at large. The truth of St. Paul's words "when one suffers, all suffer" is clear.

It seems there is enough evidence of a correlation between marijuana use and mental health issues to warrant concern. We wonder what will be the effect of passing legislation that would implicitly promote marijuana use.

While some may use marijuana to self-medicate for symptoms of anxiety or depression, there is evidence that there is also greater risk of developing psychotic illness later in life. This may be particularly in persons with certain genetic dispositions. It has also been suggested that brain development can be affected in some young people. Studies dating back to 2003 demonstrate that early-onset cannabis users exhibit poorer cognitive performance than those who first try it later in life. Young impressionable minds are curious and vulnerable. Changes brought on by marijuana use are lasting.

We are told by those who work in educational and medical fields that they are seeing more and more cases of young people falling into more frequent use of recreational marijuana with effects such as loss of focus, falling school grades, decreased motivation and drive, sleep disturbances, and in some rare cases cyclic vomiting.

It is the role of government to protect its citizens and promote their well being. This government claims that it wants to protect vulnerable populations through this legislation, but we wonder how this will be achieved. How will legalization of marijuana for recreational use protect this vulnerable sector of the population from a potentially harmful substance?

Here are some of our concerns:

- 1 We wonder whether legalization of marijuana for recreational use will normalize its use for those who might not otherwise try it. How will its use be discouraged? How will the possible dangers be advertised and communicated to the population at large, especially adolescents and young adults?
- 2 How will impaired function be measured in terms of driving or other activities that might prove harmful or a danger to others or the public at large?
- 3 How will marijuana use be governed in public areas? What protection will there be for those living in apartment houses or rooming houses?
- 4 Legalization will not dispense with a market for marijuana with a high THC content. How will the legislation deal with that?
- 5 What measures will be in place to control growing and distribution and sales?
- 6 If sales are age restricted, will there be vigorous enforcement? At what age will it be legal? Will we not still have to deal with bootlegging especially to children and youth?

The government cannot turn a blind eye to these concerns. We look forward to hearing how the government's legislation will really function to protect our vulnerable youth and young adults and promote the well being of all. It is our intention to hold a public forum on this matter sometime in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Rev. Rick Spies
Past Chair ADC
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cc Pastor Shawn Erb, Chairperson, ADC
Mary Anne Tangney, Secretary, ADC