

Rev. Rick and Members of the Association of Dundas Churches

Thank you for your letter.

I acknowledge receipt of your concerns. In fact, we will be strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis. I appreciate the seriousness of this legislation and understand the appreciate the concerns you have expressed. I assure you that our Government shares your concern for the health and welfare of Canadians. That's why we are leading the world by taking an evidence-based, public health approach to the legalization and strict regulation of cannabis.

The current system on the prohibition of cannabis does not work. It has allowed criminals and organized crime to profit, while failing to keep cannabis out of the hands of Canadian youth. Our youth today have some of the highest rates of cannabis use in the world. In many cases, it is easier for our kids to buy marijuana than cigarettes. As you know I have worked with youth for the past 20 years. I can tell you first hand that this is the case.

That's why, after careful consideration and extensive consultation with law enforcement, health and safety experts, and the creation of the Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation, our Government has introduced a plan in Bill C-45 to legalize, strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis.

Our plan will create a framework for strictly controlling the production, distribution, sale and possession of cannabis in Canada. Bill C-45 would also, for the first time, make it a criminal offence to sell cannabis specifically to a minor and create significant penalties for those who engage young Canadians in trafficking of cannabis.

In addition to strictly regulating cannabis, we are also moving to toughen laws around impaired driving. In our plan, new penalties will be added to the Criminal Code to enforce a zero tolerance policy for those driving under the influence of cannabis. We will also authorize new tools for police to better detect drivers who are impaired, and will set stricter legal limits for cannabis and other impairing drugs. Police have been asking for these resources, and so we will deliver.

Our Government will also invest the necessary resources to make sure there is appropriate capacity within the public service and law enforcement to license, inspect and enforce all aspects of the plan. As well, we will invest in a robust public awareness campaign so that Canadians are well informed about the dangers of driving under the influence of cannabis. Working in partnership with provinces, territories and local communities, our Government will provide the necessary funds to train and equip law enforcement so that Canada's roads remain safe for everyone.

We know there's a lot of work left to do. We will continue to engage with provinces, territories, Indigenous peoples, and local communities over the coming months to make sure we get this right.

Thank you again for writing to me. I will be pleased to share details with you as they are released. The Health Committee will be studying this in the fall. You can watch the proceedings through the government website.

Sincerely,  
Filomena