

## Emma Todd

Prevent Don't Promote –

[www.preventdontpromote.org](http://www.preventdontpromote.org).

Submission to the Canadian Senate Social Affairs Committee Hearing Bill C45 Spring 2018.

We agree with the below comments of Senators and witnesses to the extent that Canadians must be informed before they make a decision to use cannabis.

However, there is no published data that Canadians in all demographics and regions are adequately informed of the health risks as outlined below by Health Canada.

### **Senators and Witnesses Stating That Canadians Must Be Informed:**

Senator Art Eggleton, April 19 2018: .... Isn't it right that the person who is considered an adult should have the right to make that kind of decision, **hopefully fully informed** and doing what is best for their own health?

Ms. MacLennan, May 9, 2018: We actually believe that with the **right public information**, that young adult at 18 could make the decision as to whether he or she should consume some amount of cannabis in whatever form.

Senator Poirier: .... When your report was done in 2016, the **government clearly didn't take the time to properly inform Canadians**. To ensure that Canadians are well informed of all the consequences, whether it's health, law or otherwise, should the government, in your opinion, delay the legislation to ensure we have the proper information out there for the people?

Ms. McLellan: .... Our report is embedded in the other two words: restriction and regulation. **Public education will be key.**

Senator Poirier: .... despite the millions of dollars the government announced in the budget, **Health Canada has only spent \$295,000 on its official cannabis public education campaign. The campaign that was targeted especially to youth only began in March 2018.**

....

Dr. Ware: .... **This is a topic which is in the press almost every single day. It is dominating Twitter and social media platforms. The youth are engaged. They are well aware of what the risks have been. I think they were told for decades, and in fact when some of us were youths, about the harms of cannabis and marijuana and it continues to be used widely. I think the youth are aware. I think we underestimate their intelligence and awareness of the issues. If they are taught and tuning into the messages, including the dialogue in these chambers and what is being discussed in the public media, there is an opportunity for public education in every single intervention that we do. Everything single word we put out there will be heard by young people. Teaching them that cannabis use is an adult activity, that the longer they delay using cannabis the safer it is for their brains, teaching them about the potency — these are simple messages....**

Our position: Not one witness, including no government representative, was able to substantiate that there has been broad-based, sustained public education, nor was a single witness able to demonstrate that the educational efforts that have been done are evidence based and or inclusive of all demographics. One of the reason Canada has high rates of the use of marijuana products is a serious long term lack of spending on public awareness, for parents, educators, medical professionals, for youth and young adults, along with many others – which has resulted in a lowering of perception of risk associated with use and the challenges we now face.

### **Health Canada Advice on Health Risks**

“Cannabis should not be used if you:

- are under the age of 25,
- are allergic to any cannabinoid or to smoke,
- have serious liver, kidney, heart or lung disease,
- have a personal or family history of serious mental disorders such as schizophrenia, psychosis, depression, or bipolar disorder,
- are pregnant, are planning to get pregnant, or are breast-feeding,
- are a man who wishes to start a family,
- have a history of alcohol or drug abuse or substance dependence. ...

Serious Warnings and Precautions...

- Do not smoke or vapourize cannabis in the presence of children. ....

Cannabis use can also result in psychotic episodes characterized by: paranoia, delusions, hallucinations. The THC in cannabis can impair your ability to drive safely and operate equipment.

Refs: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-use-marijuana/licensed-producers/consumer-information-cannabis-marihuana-marijuana.html>  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/health-effects/effects.html>

### **Proposed Amendments**

As there is no published data that Canadians in all demographics and regions are adequately informed of the above Health Canada advice regarding the health risks of using cannabis, we propose the following amendments:

- A) The Act will not come into force until Statistics Canada determines that a majority of Canadians in all demographics and in all regions of Canada adequately understand the majority of health risks associated with the use of cannabis as specified by Health Canada.
- B) Cannabis must not be sold to persons that Health Canada decides that, for health reasons, must not use cannabis which include, but are not limited to, those persons so currently specified by Health Canada including persons under 25 years of age.
- C) No person may smoke or vapourize marijuana in homes where children are present.