

Ministry of Education

Deputy Minister

Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Sous-ministre

Édifice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Memorandum To: Directors of Education

From: Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister

Date: March 26, 2018

Subject: Supporting Schools – Recreational Cannabis Legalization

I am writing to let you know about the Ministry of Education's plans to prepare the sector in advance of legalization of recreational cannabis anticipated later this year.

Based on the feedback received from engagements with a diverse group of partners and stakeholders over the past several months, the ministry has announced that it will be providing \$2.8 million as part of the 2018-19 projected EPO funding, further to the GSN/EPO B-memo released earlier today.

This funding will support the development of resources and supports for the education sector, parents/guardians and students to increase awareness about cannabis, prevent and/or delay cannabis use among youth, promote healthy decision-making, ensure student safety and prepare the education sector for cannabis legalization. There will also be an allocation of funding for each board, which will be announced at a later date.

The ministry is taking a phased approach to this work. The first phase which is already underway will include minor revisions to the Ontario elementary and secondary school curriculum as well as updating OnSIS to include cannabis possession, sharing and under the influence as a reason for suspension/expulsion. The ministry will also be releasing information and resources, both before and after federal legislation is proclaimed to legalize recreational cannabis, as follows:

- Pre-legalization information and resources (mid-April 2018):
 - Evidence-based information on cannabis (e.g. fact sheet) for parents/guardians, which will include facts on cannabis, harms of use, recognizing signs of cannabis misuse, how to support their children, and sources of additional information developed in collaboration with CAMH and School Mental Health ASSIST.

- A youth-facing resource that provides fact-based information focused on prevention, harm reduction, risks of use/misuse, and sources of additional information.
- A fact sheet for educators on speaking to youth/students that will focus on what legalization means for them, and how these changes will impact their work operationally (e.g. changes to the *Education Act* regarding possible suspension and expulsion for possession or sharing of cannabis with a minor).
- Post-legalization resources and supports (for September 2018):
 - Targeted resources for mental health professionals in schools to support students, including those students with mental health and addiction needs (e.g. fact-sheet linked to mental health and addictions, Qs and As).
 - Resources for parents/guardians that make connections to the curriculum about informed decision making and how students learn about cannabis in school, including minor changes to the Health and Physical Education curriculum (e.g. quick facts).
 - More comprehensive evidence-based information on cannabis for educators to support their students (e.g. fact sheets for grades 6-8 and grades 9-12) developed in collaboration with CAMH and School Mental Health ASSIST.
 - Funding to school boards to train school board mental health leaders and system leaders, including directors of education, supervisory officers, principals/vice principals, so that they are prepared to support schools and students, including those with mental health and addiction needs.

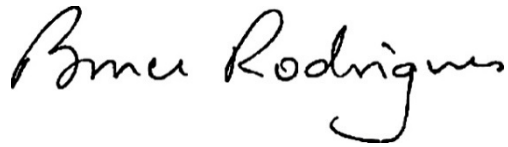
Over the coming months, the ministry will continue to engage with partners on changes to safe schools policies and protocols to address cannabis legalization. In addition, beginning in fall 2018, the ministry will be providing training opportunities for school leaders, educators, mental health and other professionals to enhance awareness of the mental health and addiction-related aspects of cannabis use among youth. The training will also equip school leaders with a clear understanding of policies and protocols coupled with concrete examples of preventative practices. More details about these training opportunities will be shared in the coming months.

I appreciate your ongoing dedication and commitment to publicly funded education in Ontario, and your support in seeing that this important information is communicated to educators, students and their families across the province.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Debbie Thompson, Director, Safe and Healthy Schools Branch at 416-325-7645 or Debbie.Thompson@ontario.ca.

As always, thank you for supporting the health and safety of Ontario students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Rodrigues". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "B" and a long, trailing "s".

Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister

c: Trustee Associations