

CANNABIS MEDIA-KIT

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS



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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is designed to support stakeholders across Peterborough City and County in their messaging related to cannabis legalization and may be freely adapted for internal use.

New evidence related to cannabis is continually emerging. While the content of this document is evidence-based, it represents the best knowledge available up to the date of publication. Accordingly, the information contained in this document may be subject to change based on the availability of new information and resources.

The following organizations have contributed to the development of this resource:

- Peterborough Public Health
- Peterborough Police Service

For more cannabis-related resources, please visit us online at www.peterboroughdrugstrategy.com.



We gratefully acknowledge the Province of Ontario
for supporting this project.

BACKGROUND

Why Peterborough needs public education around cannabis

Cannabis is the most commonly used substance in Canada, and the second most widely used recreational drug after alcohol.¹ According to a 2013 report produced by UNICEF, Canadian youth are estimated to have the highest rate of cannabis consumption in the world.²

Locally, data shows that Peterborough adults are more likely to have tried cannabis than their provincial counterparts.³ Cannabis was also identified as a problem substance by 21% of people who sought addictions treatment from FourCAST between 2016/2017.⁴

On October 17, 2018, cannabis became legal for non-medical use in Canada. With legalization, there is a need for new public education initiatives, evidence-based information and resources that address misinformation and gaps in knowledge around recreational cannabis.

While it is impossible to predict the impacts of this legislative change, engaging in open and unbiased conversation about cannabis use is the first step in reducing possible harms and promoting responsible use.

How our work will help to reduce cannabis-related harms

The Peterborough Community Cannabis Project (PCCP) will increase the capacity of key stakeholders in Peterborough City and County to respond to issues associated with cannabis legalization through the provision of evidence-based information and supports.

This project includes:

1. **Collection of local data** to assist program planning and the identification of priority populations.
2. **Training opportunities** for staff that work with people who use cannabis through our knowledge and skills development program, Question of Care.
3. **Stakeholder engagement** through community presentations and the development of cannabis resources.

QUICK FACTS

Adult prevalence of use

- After alcohol, cannabis is the most widely used substance in Canada.
- 4.4 million (15 percent) of Canadians used cannabis in 2017. Of that population, 37 percent said they used cannabis for medical reasons.⁵
- More Peterborough adults 19 years of age and older report trying cannabis than their provincial counterparts.
- In 2012, 58.8% of Peterborough men and 51.5% of Peterborough women reported ever trying cannabis compared to 45.1% of Ontario men and 35.4% of Ontario women.⁶

Youth prevalence of use

- 1 in 5 (19%) Ontario students say they used cannabis in 2017.⁷
- Use of cannabis was more prevalent among youth aged 15 to 19 (21% or 426,000) and young adults aged 20 to 24 (30% or 715,000) than among adults aged 25 or older (10% or 2.5 million).⁸
- The average age of first time cannabis use among Canadian students in grades 7 to 12 was 14 years in 2015.⁹

KEY MESSAGES

Key Message	
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who consumes cannabis should follow Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines. • Avoid mixing cannabis with other substances such as alcohol and tobacco. • Certain products and ways of using cannabis have a greater risk of harms. Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis products and safer ways to use. • Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis. Try to take breaks or “days off” to reduce impacts on your health. • If consuming edibles, take steps to reduce the risk of overconsumption. Begin with a small amount and wait one hour before deciding to take more. Edible cannabis can take 30 minutes to 2 hours to take effect. • Protect others from secondhand smoke. Avoid smoking or vaporizing indoors or in non-designated areas. • If you experience severe symptoms from cannabis use, such as disorientation, shaking, shortness of breath and/or vomiting, seek immediate medical assistance.
Physical and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis is not harmless and can affect your physical and mental health. • Regular and long-term cannabis use can hurt your lungs and make it harder to breath. • Regular and long-term cannabis use can affect your mental health, make you physically dependent or addicted. • Anyone with a personal or family history of mental health problems are at greater risk of cannabis-related psychosis and mental health problems. Adolescents and young adults (under age 25) are at an even greater risk.
Impaired-driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't drive after using cannabis. Like alcohol and other substances, cannabis impairs your ability to drive safely and can result in injury or death for you, your passengers, and others. • Mixing cannabis and alcohol intensifies impairment, leading to an even greater risk of an accident • Many factors affect the level and duration of cannabis impairment. Wait at least 6 hours or longer before driving.
Youth and young adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier use is associated with increased risks, especially for people under 16. Avoid or delay starting to use cannabis as long as possible. • Using cannabis regularly may make it harder to remember things, learn and pay attention. It may also affect your ability to think and make decisions in all aspects of your life including school, recreational activities and relationships. • The effects of cannabis may be increased if it's used often or taken with alcohol or other drugs. It's important to know what — and how much — you're taking in order to stay safe. • If you need more information or support, talk to your doctor or primary care practitioner.

Parents and caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using cannabis while parenting or caring for others. • Store cannabis products in child-resistant packaging, in a locked area out of sight and reach. • Cannabis in food products, such as cookies and brownies, can be especially tempting to curious children. • Start the conversation about cannabis early, talk often and be open. • Parents who provide their kids with balanced information about the effects associated with cannabis can help them make informed decisions. • Parents play a vital role in teaching young people to drive responsibly. That means teaching them not to drive impaired. • Look for opportunities to start the conversation.
Preconception, pregnant, and breastfeeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those thinking of becoming pregnant should avoid cannabis. • Pregnant women should abstain from using cannabis during pregnancy. • Breastfeeding women should abstain from using cannabis.
Personal Cultivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivating cannabis is not without risk. Purchasing from a licensed source is a safer method for consumers to access a carefully controlled product. • Federally licensed producers offer a safe method for Ontarians to access cannabis for medical purposes.
Dependence and addiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis can lead to addiction. Seek support if you or someone you know is having issues with cannabis use.
Use in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis is considered an intoxicating substance, similar to alcohol or prescription medication that results in impairment. • When an employee claims a medical need for cannabis, the request should be treated in the same manner as any other request for accommodation involving a prescribed medication.

The above key messages have been excerpted and/or adapted from the following sources:

Western Health. (October 2018). Cannabis – Key Messages for Healthcare providers. Retrieved from: [http://westernhealth.nl.ca/uploads/Addictions%20Prevention%20and%20Mental%20Health%20Promotion/Cannabis%20Key%20Messages%20\(Long\)%20October%202018%20\(1\).pdf](http://westernhealth.nl.ca/uploads/Addictions%20Prevention%20and%20Mental%20Health%20Promotion/Cannabis%20Key%20Messages%20(Long)%20October%202018%20(1).pdf)

Eastern Ontario Health Unit. (September 2018). Summary Cannabis Public Health Key Messages.

MEDIA RELATIONS TIPS

Preparing for an interview

Clarify the purpose

Ensure you are clear about the purpose of the interview and the focus of the story.

Practice and Prepare

Take time to review and rehearse what you want to say.

Know the audience

Consider the audience and adapt your messages to ensure they reflect the most important points or information that you need to convey.

Confirm logistics

Confirm the date and length of the interview, the journalist's deadline, and the publication/broadcast date for the story.

Managing an Interview

Don't speculate

Avoid the urge to speculate about future outcomes or things that may happen. Keep the conversation focused on the facts and only speak to what you know.

Use plain language

Speak in a manner that others will understand. Avoid using overly technical terms, specialist language or jargon, which risks alienating your audience and creates barriers to understanding.

Stay on track

Challenging questions or tangents may force the conversation off track and outside of your comfort zone. Using bridging statements to bring the conversation back to your key messages. Examples of bridging statements include:

- "The most important thing to remember is..."
- "The real issue with this is..."
- "If we take a closer look, we would see..."
- "What matters most in this situation is..."
- "Let me emphasize again..."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Cannabis

What is cannabis?

Cannabis refers to any product of the cannabis plant. Other common names include marijuana, weed, and pot among others.

Cannabis contains more than 100 chemicals called cannabinoids. THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main psychoactive chemical that produces the 'high' with cannabis. Another commonly referenced cannabinoid is CBD (cannabidiol). Unlike THC, CBD is not psychoactive and will not make you high.

Why do people use cannabis?

Cannabis is a commonly used drug in Canada and is used recreationally or for its therapeutic effects.

In 2017, 4.4 million (15 per cent) of Canadians reported having used cannabis in the past-year. Of that population, 37 per cent (or 1.6 million) said they used cannabis for medical reasons.

Medical cannabis has been legal in Canada since 2001. The federal government regulates its supply and distribution.

There is evidence that cannabis helps to relieve nausea and certain types of pain. However, more research is required to determine the therapeutic benefits of cannabis and its potential to treat other conditions.

Some people use cannabis because of the psychoactive effects produced by the chemical substance THC.

How does cannabis make you feel?

People can experience cannabis differently due to a range of factors.

Some people may feel happy or relaxed after using cannabis, while others may feel anxious, tense, fearful, and confused. Some factors that may influence how you experience cannabis include:

- how much you use
- how often and how long you've used it
- whether you smoke, vape or eat it
- your mood, your expectations and the environment you're in
- your age
- whether you have certain pre-existing medical or psychiatric conditions
- whether you've taken any alcohol or other drugs (illegal, prescription, over-the-counter or herbal).¹⁰

How do people use cannabis?

Cannabis may be consumed in a variety of ways, including smoking, vaping, dabbing, or ingesting (eating/drinking).

Is cannabis addictive?

Around 1 in 10 people who use cannabis will develop an addiction to it. This rate rises to 1 in 6 for people who start using cannabis in their teens.¹¹

Regular use can lead to psychological dependence, including a preoccupation with using cannabis, and feelings of anxiety when it is unavailable. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, long periods of cannabis use may also result in mild physical withdrawal symptoms when a person stops using. Symptoms may last for up to a week and include irritability, anxiety, upset stomach, loss of appetite, sweating and disturbed sleep.

Whether or not someone will develop a Cannabis Use Disorder is unique to the individual. While research in this area is still ongoing, the likelihood of developing a problematic relationship with cannabis is influenced by your length and intensity of use, the potency of the products used, your genetics and personal history, and your age of first use.¹²

Is cannabis dangerous?

Like alcohol and tobacco, cannabis use has health risks. These risks increase based on how long and how often you use cannabis, the potency of the product, your method of consumption (e.g., smoke, vape, eat), your family history and your age.

Some people are more vulnerable to the potential harms of cannabis. These groups include children and youth under the age of 25, a fetus or nursing child, and those with a family history of psychosis.¹³

Heavy or regular cannabis is also associated with several adverse health outcomes, including:

- problems with thinking, memory or physical co-ordination
- impairment, which can lead to serious injuries, including those from car accidents
- hallucinations, such as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that do not really exist
- mental health problems, specifically if you or an immediate family member has had a mental health issue, like psychosis or an addiction to alcohol or other drugs
- cannabis dependence
- breathing or lung problems from smoking
- cancer from smoking
- problems during or after pregnancy, especially if cannabis is smoked¹⁴

If you use cannabis, it is important to be aware of these risks and how you can reduce or avoid them. For more information on limiting these risks, Canada's [Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#) may be helpful.

Is there a safer way to use cannabis?

If you choose to use cannabis, Canada's [Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#) outlines 10 recommendations aimed at limiting possible harms associated with use:

- Cannabis use has health risks best avoided by abstaining
- Delay taking up cannabis use until later in life
- Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis products
- Don't use synthetic cannabinoids
- Avoid smoking burnt cannabis—choose safer ways of using
- If you smoke cannabis, avoid harmful smoking practices

- Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis
- Don't use and drive, or operate other machinery
- Avoid cannabis use altogether if you are at risk for mental health problems or are pregnant
- Avoid combining the risks identified above

Is it safe for young people to use cannabis?

Young people are particularly vulnerable to risks associated with cannabis use because brain development isn't complete until people reach their mid-20s.

Research in this area is ongoing, but it is generally accepted that adolescents who begin using cannabis before age 16 are at an increased risk of adverse physical and mental health outcomes.

Though it isn't possible to predict who will experience harms from cannabis, the association between cannabis use at a younger age and several negative outcomes has led to the recommendation to delay taking up cannabis use until later in life.

For more information about the risks associated with cannabis use for young people see the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse summary report on [The Effects of Cannabis Use during Adolescence](#).

Is it safe to use cannabis if you are pregnant or breastfeeding?

Cannabis use during pregnancy may affect pre-natal growth and development. Though more research in this area is needed, cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding may be associated with increased risk of the following outcomes:

- Low birth weight
- Pre-term labour
- Long-term health problems (cardiovascular and mental health)
- Short and long-term learning, development, and behavioural issues

It isn't possible to predict with certainty which individuals will experience harms from cannabis, but risks associated with cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding has led to the recommendation to avoid using cannabis use if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

For more information about cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding visit the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada's [Pregnancy Info](#) webpage.

Is it safe to use cannabis and drive?

Like alcohol, using cannabis inhibits your ability to drive safely. Even at low doses, using cannabis impairs a number of cognitive functions that affect your ability to operate a motorized vehicle or heavy machinery safely. In particular, cannabis affects perception, short-term memory, decision-making, and motor skills.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction has compiled a summary of evidence about [Cannabis Use and Driving](#) and has identified the following highlights:

- After alcohol, cannabis is the most commonly detected substance among drivers who die in traffic crashes.
- Driving under the influence of cannabis doubles the risk of being involved in a crash.
- This risk increases even more when cannabis is used with alcohol. When used together, the effects of either drug may be more powerful, resulting in greater impairment than had either of the drugs been used alone.

Due to the association between cannabis use and the harms around drug-impaired driving, it is recommended that people don't drive or operate machinery within 6 hours of using cannabis.

About Cannabis Legalization

What is the status of cannabis legalization in Canada?

In 2017, the federal government introduced legislation to legalize and regulate cannabis for non-medical use. Bill C-45, the Cannabis Act, received Royal Assent in June 2018 and cannabis for non-medical use is legal in Canada as of October 17, 2018.

Canada legalized cannabis use for medical purposes in 2001.

What are the rules around cannabis use in Ontario?

The following restrictions apply to purchasing, possessing and consuming non-medical cannabis in Ontario:

- 19 years or older is the legal age to buy, use, or possess cannabis.
- There are serious penalties for drug-impaired driving and a zero tolerance limit for young, novice, or commercial drivers.
- Adults of legal age will be permitted to possess up to 30 grams of dried cannabis in public.
- As of October 17, 2018, the Ontario Cannabis Store website is the only legal option for purchasing recreational cannabis.
- A limit of four cannabis plants may be grown per residence.
- Use of recreational cannabis is prohibited in workplaces.

Where can I purchase legal cannabis?

The Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) website is the only legal option for purchasing non-medical cannabis in Ontario. Individuals must be 19 years old and present proof of age upon product delivery.

In August 2018, the provincial government announced that it would introduce legislation to authorize a private retail model by April 1, 2019.

The province will also grant municipalities a one-time opportunity to opt-out of having private cannabis retail stores in their communities. The opt-out deadline is January 22, 2019.

Where is cannabis use permitted?

Recreational and medical cannabis can be smoked or vaped in the following areas:

- Private residences (not including private residences that are workplaces)
- Many outdoor public places, such as sidewalks and parks
- Designated guest rooms in hotels, motels and inns
- Controlled areas in residential care facilities, psychiatric facilities, veterans' facilities and residential hospices
- Residential boats and vehicles with permanent sleeping accommodations and cooking facilities when parked or anchored and they meet other criteria

Recreational and medical cannabis **cannot** be smoked or vaped in:

- Enclosed public spaces, enclosed workplaces and other sheltered areas with a roof and more than two walls (such as bus shelters)
- Vehicles and boats being driven or under someone's care or control
- Indoor common areas of condominiums, apartment buildings and university/college residences
- Schools and school grounds, outdoor grounds of a community recreational facility and public areas within 20 metres of perimeter of those grounds
- Restaurant and bar patios, and public areas within 9 metres of a patio
- Child care centres, and places where an early years program or services is provided
- Places where home child care is provided, regardless of whether children are present
- Children's playgrounds and public areas within 20 metres of playgrounds
- Publicly owned sporting areas (not including golf courses), adjacent spectator areas and public areas within 20 metres of these areas
- Restaurant and bar patios and public areas within 9 metres of a patio
- Nine metres from the entrance or exit of a public hospital, private hospital, psychiatric facility, long-term care home and independent health facility
- Outdoor ground of public hospitals, private hospitals, psychiatric facilities and specified Ontario buildings
- Reserved seating areas of outdoor sports or entertainment venues¹⁵

What are the rules for consuming cannabis in the City of Peterborough?

Municipalities have the power to enact by-laws that further restrict the consumption of cannabis in defined areas, such as parks.

At the present time, the Peterborough Smoking By-law only applies to the smoking of medical cannabis and tobacco.

What are the rules for drug-impaired driving?

Drug-impaired driving remains a criminal offence in Canada. In April 2017, the federal government introduced legislation under Bill-C36 to strengthen Canada's impaired driving laws.

The new law gives police the authority to require a driver suspected of drug use to provide a sample of oral fluid to test for the presence of drugs, similar to the current approach for alcohol screening at roadside using approved devices. The legislation also establishes blood concentration limits for THC.

ABOUT THE PETERBOROUGH DRUG STRATEGY

Founded in 2009, the Peterborough Drug Strategy (PDS) is a collective that unites stakeholders in Peterborough City and County to develop collaborative solutions to minimize the harms of substance use for individuals, families, and our community as a whole.

Mission

The Peterborough Drug Strategy collaborative is committed to the ongoing development and implementation of a community-based drug strategy that aims to reduce the harms related to substance use in the County and City of Peterborough. This strategy works to improve the health, safety, and well-being of citizens with an approach based on the four pillars of prevention, harm reduction, enforcement and treatment.

Partners

Peterborough Public Health
PARN – Your Community AIDS Resource Network
FourCAST (Four Counties Addiction Service Team)
Peterborough Police Service
Ontario Provincial Police
Peterborough Social Services
John Howard Society of Peterborough
Canadian Mental Health Association – Haliburton Kawartha Pineridge
Peterborough Regional Health Centre
Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre

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