



# Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

1580 West Broadway

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March 17, 2016

Mayor Gregor Robertson and City Councillors  
City of Vancouver  
City Hall, 453 West 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Robertson and City Councillors

**Re: Medical Marijuana Dispensaries in Vancouver**

I am writing on behalf of the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) to reiterate the Board's request that Vancouver City Council consider increasing the distance between retail medical marijuana dispensaries and schools from the current 300 metres to 500 metres. The Board previously included this request as part of its Board approved submission provided to council on June 17, 2015 (see attached), however we did not receive a response to the requests contained in our submission.

As stated in the Board's previous submission, the VBE recognizes that the City has both the authority and the responsibility to enact measures to ensure that business is conducted appropriately in the context of health, safety and public interest. As the primary provider of education to children and youth in the city, the Board has the responsibility to ensure that the safety and educational needs of those youth are taken into account whenever decisions are being made that may impact them. Accordingly, the Board is opposed to any action that could result in easier access to marijuana by children and youth, and therefore reiterates its request.

Substantial evidence exists to indicate that the use of marijuana by adolescents has significant and far-reaching harmful effects. Although simply increasing the minimum distance between dispensaries and schools will not, in itself, solve the problem of youth marijuana use, it is one strategy that could contribute to reducing the chances of youth engaging in the use of marijuana. Students who are exposed to retail outlets which use colourful and attractive advertising to sell marijuana near their school may develop the perception that marijuana use is an attractive choice, legal and not harmful to minors. Any measures taken to reduce this perception would be helpful.

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**Board of School Trustees:**

Mike Lombardi – Chairperson

Janet Fraser – Vice-Chairperson

Joy Alexander Patti Bacchus Fraser Ballantyne

Penny Noble Christopher Richardson Stacy Robertson Allan Wong

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson  
and City Councillors  
March 17, 2016  
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On behalf of the Vancouver Board of Education, I would request that Vancouver City Council once again consider increasing the distance between retail medical marijuana dispensaries and schools from the current 300 metres to 500 metres.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Lombardi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" and last name "Lombardi" clearly distinguishable.

Mike Lombardi  
Chairperson

cc: VBE Trustees  
Scott Robinson, Superintendent of Schools  
Russell Horswill, Secretary Treasurer

Attachment: Medical Marijuana Dispensary Public Hearing Statement

**From:** Maria Chona T. Caparas **On Behalf Of** Rick Krowchuk  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 17, 2015 5:02 PM  
**To:** [mayorandcouncil@vancouver.ca](mailto:mayorandcouncil@vancouver.ca)  
**Cc:** Rick Krowchuk; Marlene Phillips; Maria Chona T. Caparas  
**Subject:** Medical Marijuana Dispensary Public Hearing Statement from the VSB

To: The Mayor and Councillors of the City of Vancouver (email: [mayorandcouncil@vancouver.ca](mailto:mayorandcouncil@vancouver.ca))

Following former Chairperson Christopher Richardson's presentation at a City Council Meeting on June 10, 2015, the Board, at its meeting of June 15, 2015, approved the following motion:

That the Vancouver Board of Education support the Vancouver Board of Education's presentation to the City of Vancouver dated June 11, 2015 entitled ***Medical Marijuana Dispensary Public Hearing Statement***.

Attached is a copy of the presentation.

Regards,

Rick Krowchuk  
Secretary Treasurer  
Vancouver Board of Education

## **Medical Marijuana Dispensary Public Hearing Statement**

### **Vancouver School Board**

June 11, 2015

As a partner of the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Board of Education recognizes that the City has both the authority and the responsibility to enact measures to ensure that business is conducted appropriately in the context of health, safety and public interest. As the primary provider of education to children and youth in the city, the Board of Education has a responsibility to ensure that the safety and educational needs of those youth are taken into account whenever decisions are made that may impact them. Accordingly, the Board would be opposed to any action that could result in easier access to marijuana by children and youth, and requests that measures be put in place that would mitigate that possibility.

Although there are a variety of opinions about the impact of use of marijuana on adults, there is substantial and accepted medical evidence to indicate that use of marijuana by adolescents has significant and far-reaching harmful effects. Unfortunately, the recent proliferation of marijuana dispensaries, combined with inaccurate and harmful information available through the media, has 'normalized' the idea for many of our youth that marijuana use by youth is legal, routine, societally acceptable, and not harmful. We disagree.

In an article entitled *Adverse Health Effects of Marijuana Use* published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in June 2014, a number of statements are made which clearly support the idea that marijuana use by adolescents is harmful. Among other things, the article states that:

- The regular use of marijuana during adolescence is of particular concern, since use by this age group is associated with an increased likelihood of deleterious consequences including:
  - altered brain development
  - addiction
  - poor educational outcomes, with increased likelihood of dropping out of schools
  - cognitive impairment, with lower IQ among those who were frequent users during adolescence
  - diminished life satisfaction and achievement
- Early and regular marijuana use predicts an increased risk of marijuana addiction, which in turn predicts an increased risk of other illicit drugs.
- During (adolescent) development periods, (the adolescent brain) is intrinsically more vulnerable than a mature brain to the adverse long-term effects of environmental insults, such as exposure to THC, the primary active ingredient in marijuana

In addition, an article in the *Pediatrics: Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* entitled *The Impact of Marijuana Policies on Youth: Clinical, Research, and Legal Update* published in January 2015 indicates that:

- The potential negative consequences of short and long term recreational use of marijuana in adolescents include:
  - Impaired short term memory, decreased concentration and attention span, decreased ability to problem-solve, all of which clearly interfere with learning
- Marijuana use during adolescence is associated with reductions in the odds of high school completion and degree attainment and increases in the use of other illicit drugs and suicide attempts
- The adolescent brain, particularly the prefrontal cortex areas controlling judgment and decision making, is not fully developed until the mid 20s
- The younger an adolescent begins using drugs, including marijuana, the more likely it is that drug dependence or addiction will develop in adulthood

This information is obtained from two of the most highly regarded scientific medical journals in the medical community, providing clear evidence that marijuana use amongst adolescents is, indeed, harmful.

As a result, the Board has concerns about the recent proliferation of marijuana dispensaries that have appeared in the city over the past two years. Some of these establishments are in close proximity to schools. We do not dispute that despite the best efforts of parents, school and district staff, and the support of community partners such as the Vancouver Police Department and Vancouver Coastal Health, youth choose and are able to access marijuana in a number of ways. We strongly believe, however, that

the answer to this problem is not to set up marijuana outlets near our schools. Unless very firm boundaries are set in place and enforced strictly, we have significant concern that these outlets could easily result in an increase in marijuana use by youth in the city.

Based on these concerns, the Board has a number of requests that we would ask council to consider as they make decisions regarding the proposed amendments to city by-laws:

- 1. The Board would ask that a portion of any licensing fee be designated for educational purposes and youth addiction support services.** In collaboration with and through the support of our community partner, Vancouver Coastal Health, the district provides substance abuse education programming and support for students who struggle with drug-related behaviours. The current level of support, however, is already not able to meet the growing needs in this area. We would therefore ask that if the city is going to license these establishments, that you take steps to mitigate any potential increases in youth marijuana use by providing directly funded support to youth drug awareness and addiction support programs in the city.
- 2. The Board would request that whatever by-law amendments are put in place, they be enforced strictly, particularly when they are initially enacted.** Should youth discover that some rules are not being enforced, they are extremely likely to take advantage of that fact. In particular, the Board would request that bylaws regarding access by minors to the proposed establishments be strictly enforced and that consequences to establishments that do not honour this be swift and meaningful.
- 3. The Board would request that the city consider increasing the distance between licensed establishments and schools from the proposed 300 metres to a distance of 500 metres.** Although we understand that 300 metres appears to be the standard in other jurisdictions such as Washington and Colorado, it would be our belief that 300 metres is a very short distance between a school and a business selling substances that are illegal and harmful for youth consumption. Any measure that can be taken to make access more difficult for youth should be strongly considered.
- 4. The Board would request that advertising to minors, either directly or indirectly, be strictly prohibited in all areas in and around the business.** It is requested that a 'zone' be established around the establishments in which advertisement is prohibited.
- 5. The Board would request that, despite the very recent supreme court ruling enabling sales of forms of medical marijuana other than in dried product and oils, the City consider not allowing other products such as marijuana cookies and candies to be sold.** There is evidence to suggest that these products are attractive to children and youth, who may not understand what they are ingesting when it appears to be a cookie or candy. There is also concern about the delayed effect of the drug when it is consumed through edible products and potential for overdose.
- 6. It is assumed that all establishments, including those currently in existence, will be subject to any and all new rules contained in the proposed by-law amendments.**

The Board understands and appreciates that the City has the responsibility to consider the views of all citizens, many of whom will hold a variety of views on the subject of marijuana use. The Board is not making a broad statement on the use of this drug. We do, however, wish to make it very clear that use of marijuana by youth is illegal, medically harmful and very likely to create barriers to life success. We therefore ask that you carefully consider the impact of any by-law amendments on this particular group of citizens before making any decisions that will negatively impact the current youth and future adult citizens of the City of Vancouver.