



Manitoba Federation of Labour Submission to the Manitoba Legislative Standing Committee on Bill 25

The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act

Manitoba Federation of Labour

303-275 BROADWAY, WINNIPEG MG R3C 4M6 | (204)-947-1400

Bill 25: *The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act*

On behalf of the Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL), Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers, we wish to offer some recommendations related to *Bill 25: The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act*. We are pleased to see the government undertaking some of the very significant planning work needed to prepare for the imminent legalization of marijuana in Canada. However, when it comes to harm prevention, one of the most important and essential pieces of the puzzle is the establishment of a public system for sales and distribution. We recommend that government formally recognize the imperative of public sales and distribution to harm prevention - among other benefits - and begin the work of preparing to operationalize a public system in co-operation with the MGEU and public sector workers.

We all know that marijuana is not a normal commodity, so it shouldn't be treated like one. It shouldn't be bought and sold like just any other consumer good. The legalization of marijuana presents a number of risks that need to be mitigated and addressed: impaired driving, addictions and mental health, physical health risks, and special risks associated with youth users, just to name a few. A public model for marijuana sales and distribution is the best and most responsible way to ensure safe sales, as well as quality service, strong public education, and good family-supporting jobs. And Manitobans favour a public system - a recent Probe Research study commissioned by the MGEU found that two thirds of Manitobans agree that marijuana should be sold in stores owned and managed by government, similar to Liquor Marts.

In contrast to a private system, focused on profit maximization, a public model can keep the focus on public health. Many of the risks associated with marijuana can best be

mitigated at the point of sale, similar to alcohol. A Liquor Mart-type option will best enable:

- Experienced and well-trained staff who will prioritize checking ID and refusing sales to intoxicated customers;
- Regulation and labelling of potency for safety of use;
- Appropriate product density and hours of operation to reduce potential product misuse and abuse;
- Regulation of advertising and marketing, consistent with a culture of safety, and avoidance of excessive commercialization; and
- Social responsibility education and awareness.

Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries has the expertise, capacity and human resources to operate a public model for marijuana sales. We urge government to expand its harm prevention focus to product sales and distribution, and commit to a public model, which has a proven record for selling controlled substances in a healthy and socially-responsible way.

Finally, we would be remiss if we didn't also flag the importance of ensuring that appropriate treatment options are available to support Manitobans who are adversely impacted by marijuana abuse, with greater focus on education and awareness in our schools and communities, and better services through the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM). Marijuana sales will generate significant new revenues for the provincial treasury that can be invested to protect and improve these and other critical public services that families count on.