

March 2018 Edition –Current Cannabis Laws - Alix Flynn

March 6, 2018

Open Letter to:

- Federal Government of Canada, Office of the Prime Minister, 80 Wellington Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
- Province of British Columbia, Honourable Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Parliament Buildings Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4
- Jane Thorntwaite, North Vancouver MLA, Seymour Constituency Office. Lynn Valley Village 217 – 1233 Lynn Valley Road, North Vancouver, BC V7J 0A1
- Policing authorities of Vancouver, Public Affairs Section, 3585 Graveley St, Vancouver, BC V5K 5J5
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) 147 East 14 Street, North Vancouver, BC V7L 2N4
- The Farm Dispensary, 369 Columbia Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 4J1
- WEEDS® Glass & Gifts Dispensary 143 2nd Street East, North Vancouver, and 991 Marine Dr. North Vancouver, BC

During the fall of 2016 and January to mid-March 2017, WEEDS and “The Farm” sold marijuana to a healthy and productive 21 year old young person. He did not have a medical prescription for medical cannabis.

Current Cannabis Laws -

Cannabis (marijuana) remains a Schedule II drug under the *Controlled Drug and Substances Act*, and, unless otherwise regulated for production and distribution for medical purposes, is subject to offences under that Act. Possessing and selling cannabis for non-medical purposes is still illegal everywhere in Canada.

This person was physical and mentally healthy. He had not seen a doctor at any time before the fall of 2016 or through mid-March 2017 to receive a medical prescription for medical marijuana. He was working as an apprentice carpenter, playing sports and leading an independent life.

Although the laws will change to legalize the sale of non-medical cannabis in July 2018, it was clearly not legal for non-medical purposes in 2016 and 2017.

The policing authorities of North Vancouver and Vancouver have done a disservice to the youths of the lower mainland by not enforcing the laws as they have been legislated in 2016, 2017 and to the date of legalization in 2018.

This young person’s psychosis started in early 2017 and continued until he was hospitalized March 17 2017.

Regardless of public opinion, the science is clear: Regular recreational use of marijuana during adolescence is harmful to the brain, which isn’t fully developed until the age of 25.

The hospitalization, for over 30 days, cost the taxpayers uncalculated amounts of dollars. It took this young person out of the taxpaying work force. It took his family, Mom and Dad, out of the taxpaying work force. His care continues to draw costs for medication and on-going professional medical support.

The purchase of cannabis without a medical prescription is illegal. I am disappointed the federal government, the province of BC and the legal authorities have not acted on the current laws.

Going forward there should be great concern for legalization of marijuana. Research is proving recreational use of marijuana increases an adolescent’s risk for anxiety and depression; addictions; disruptions in cognitive development; brain changes that can stretch well into adulthood,

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including impaired activity in the areas that govern alertness, awareness, learning, memory and inhibitory control; and overall lower IQ. The long-term risks of using recreational marijuana are even greater for adolescents with ADD/ADHD because the cognitive issues are magnified in those with already-low prefrontal cortex (PFC) function.

It is true the psychosis cannot be directly linked to the marijuana sold by WEEDS or “the Farm”. Likewise I’m not a medical expert, but it is clear talking to the medical professionals involved in this young person’s care, that marijuana did play a part in the psychosis.

Plans for legalization going forward set a minimum age of 19. This will lead to possibly up to 6 years of negative effects on the developing brains of young people across Canada. The costs to young people, their families and society could be far greater than the revenue from taxing the sale of legalized marijuana.

Finally, the cannabis sold to the young person of this letter included Shatter. Shatter is an extract from the cannabis plant that concentrates the chemical compound THC. These extracts

can yield over 80% THC content. The legalization of cannabis does NOT address the level of THC. Again the potential effects on users could be life changing and not in a positive way.

WEEDS and “The Farm” are not selling organic vegetables. I do not believe Shatter is the cannabis recommended by doctors in the treatment of medical conditions. I support the medical use of marijuana to qualified patients under the supervision and approval of physicians. It is clear these dispensaries are not meeting this criteria to sell only for medical purposes.

The head line from Victoria February 20, 2018 – “Budget 2018 puts people first, makes life more affordable for British Columbians”. The legalization of cannabis does not put our young people first. The tax dollars to care for youth affected by marijuana will not make life more affordable for British Columbians.

My concern is that younger adults could see their brains adversely affected by marijuana, and there is a greater concern that not enough is known about the long-term impacts on the

brain. Why is the federal government willing to endanger our youth? Further, lack of proper regulations and parameters to set level of THC expose all the population to potentially dangerous levels of cannabis.

It would appear the government is putting the tax revenue ahead of health and is opening the door to untold suffering for countless families.

I urge the government to change the minimum age, to provide warnings of mental health risks and to limit THC levels available.

As a family directly affected by cannabis before legalization, I suggest the government officials work with the professionals in mental health before more young people have their lives shattered.

Sincerely, Alix Flynn
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