



**CANADIANS FOR FAIR ACCESS
TO MEDICAL MARIJUANA**
CANADIENS POUR L'ACCÈS ÉQUITABLE
À LA MARIJUANA MÉDICALE



March 24, 2020

TO: The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C. M.P., Minister of Health
70 Colombine Driveway, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Subject: Protect patients during COVID-19 – designate medical cannabis an essential service

Dear Minister Hajdu,

On behalf of The Arthritis Society, Canadian AIDS Society, Wounded Warriors Canada and Canadians for Fair Access to Medical Marijuana, we are writing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic to urgently ask that all activities involved in preserving patient access to medical cannabis through the government-regulated stream qualify as essential services. Such a designation is important to ensure delivery of necessary medicines, including medical cannabis is maintained should any restrictions in mail service arise.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians access medical cannabis through the legal framework, many who are vulnerable, critically or chronically ill and depend on this treatment for issues like chemo induced nausea, pain, arthritis, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS symptoms and complications and more. Many veterans also depend on medical cannabis for PTSD.

Health Canada has a constitutional obligation to ensure a working medical cannabis access program is in place.

The only way to legally access medical cannabis is directly from licensed medical sellers through the mail. As mail service is scaled back, patients may face barriers or delays to accessing their treatment, forcing them into the unregulated market. This increases the potential of COVID-19 infection drastically and puts elderly and immunocompromised patients at severe risk.

There is strong clinical evidence showing the efficacy of cannabis for reducing dependence on opioids and in Health Canada's Canadian Cannabis Survey, 35% of patients report that medical cannabis has allowed them to decrease their use of opioid pain relievers. Disruption in medical cannabis supply puts patients at risk of increased opioid use, potential overdose and other related issues. Switching to other medications at this time may require involvement from health care professionals when we should be taking steps to reduce the burden on the health care system.

Seeing recreational cannabis stores in provinces like Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick be designated essential, we expect the same designation be applied federally for medical cannabis to support patients who need access the most.

We appreciate and commend your work in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis to save lives, and hope that you can support these patients who need your help.

Kindest Regards,

**Canadians for Fair Access
to Medical Marijuana**

Gerald Major, President
*Max Monahan-Ellison, Vice
President*

Arthritis Society

*Trish Barbato,
President and CEO*

Canadian AIDS Society

*Gary Lacasse, Executive
Director*

**Wounded Warriors
Canada**

*Scott Maxwell
Executive Director*



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CC:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

The Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety

The Honourable Christine Elliot, Minister of Health, Ontario

The Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, British Columbia

The Honourable Tyler Shandro, Minister of Health, Alberta

The Honourable Cameron Friesen, Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, Manitoba

The Honourable Jim Reiter, Minister of Health, Saskatchewan

The Honourable Hugh Flemming, Minister of Health, New Brunswick

The Honourable Dr. John Haggie, Minister of Health and Community Services, Newfoundland and Labrador

The Honourable Randy Delorey, Minister of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia

The Honourable James Aylward, Minister of Health and Wellness, Prince Edward Island

The Honourable, Danielle McCann, Minister of Health and Social Services, Quebec