



July 12, 2021

Mississauga City Council
Mississauga Civic Centre
300 City Centre Drive
Mississauga, ON L5B 3C1

Re: Opting in to a public cannabis retail option for Ontario's municipalities

Dear Mississauga City Council members,

I'm writing to express OPSEU/SEFPO's support for your decision to reject private cannabis retail, once again. Like most Ontarians, our members are in favour of the legalized sale of cannabis, but we want a safe and responsible option – a public retail option.

We understand that Mississauga is 1 of 70 municipalities in Ontario that hasn't permitted retail cannabis, largely due to concerns about your city's lack of oversight over store location and density. These are legitimate concerns, especially when it comes to the privatized sale of cannabis where retailers' top priority is profit - not public health and safety. We've all seen the pitfalls of privatization during the pandemic and we don't believe this is a responsible option for the retail sale of cannabis.

OPSEU/SEFPO is Ontario's largest public sector union, proudly representing 8,300 members at the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO). These workers are experts in the socially responsible sale of alcohol. While our union has always supported the legalization of cannabis in Ontario, we believe the most effective way for governments of all stripes to keep cannabis away from children and youth and minimize the black market is through a public retail model, with trained expert staff, like we have for alcohol distribution.

The Ontario government forcing municipalities to opt-in or opt-out of having licensed, privatized cannabis stores within their municipal boundaries was a false dilemma. There is another, more responsible option for those who have opted out of the private retail model – the public retail option, through the LCBO. This was the plan when public cannabis sales were first introduced, but then discarded in favour of the private model.

It is clear that municipalities, such as Mississauga, who have opted out of private cannabis retail aren't opposed to the legal sale of cannabis. Instead, they care deeply about the health and well-being of their communities. They support job creation, but want decent jobs. They want the local economy to flourish, but in a safe and responsible way.



And Ontarians agree. Most believe that publicly-run cannabis stores are a better, more responsible plan. They believe that stores run by the LCBO would do a better job of keeping kids safe and would also generate more revenue for the government that can be used for our schools, hospitals and other public services. It's a win-win.

We must continue to demand the public option, with publicly-operated Ontario Cannabis Store retail locations, as we encourage Ontarians to shop local and support the effort to rebuild Ontario. The private cannabis industry, and its well-funded lobbyists, are inevitably pushing to expand private cannabis retail, but that doesn't make it the best choice. The public model is the balanced approach and the right approach, with public safety, accessibility and transparency are its foundation.

Municipalities, such as Mississauga, who have opted out of private cannabis retail should have a public option. OPSEU/SEFPO will continue to demand it, and we encourage you to join us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Thomas', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
OPSEU/SEFPO President

C. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance