



21 November 2019 (Ottawa, ON) – Over 800,000 Canadians are experimenting with recreational or illegal cannabis products for their health.

According to Statistics Canada, there are 811,000 Canadians taking recreational or illegal cannabis products for their health without a doctor note/prescription. These are not products that have been approved by Health Canada as over-the-counter medicines (OTCs) or natural health products (NHPs). Until Health Canada changes the law that prevents the manufactures of OTCs and NHPs from seeking their approval, they never will be.

Consumer Health Products Canada recognizes that cannabis is being embraced as a health product globally. Right now, Canada has an opportunity to demonstrate to the world how to manage, in an evidence-based manner, the risks associated with recreational cannabis use while supporting research into its potential health benefits.

Not all cannabis ingredients are addictive. Cannabidiol (CBD) which is found in both recreational cannabis and hemp has been recently studied by the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO (2018) CBD Critical Review Report of their Expert Committee on Drug Dependence concluded, “in humans, CBD exhibits no effects indicative of any abuse or dependence potential”. Cannabis ingredients that are shown to have no addiction potential should be regulated the same way as any other OTC or NHP. However, Health Canada has not recognized the WHO’s conclusions. This has led to potential medicines being sold as recreational products, putting Canadians at risk as they are forced to take treatment into their own hands.

Medicines should not be sold next to recreational products. The current government approach is forcing health-seeking Canadians into retail models designed to sell recreational products. For many, this represents an unwelcome exposure to recreational cannabis. Health Canada must continue to safeguard the well-being of all Canadians, including those that are seeking cannabis health products. Regulation of these products utilizing the existing framework for OTCs and NHPs will help ensure that consumers seek access to medical experts such as pharmacists in the appropriate retail setting. This is an important part of the safe, effective use of these products and in enabling Canadians to make informed decisions.

OTC and NHP regulations have long provided Canadians with protections, which do not exist for recreational cannabis. Most importantly, every product goes through an approval process with Health Canada where evidence must demonstrate that the product’s health benefits outweigh any risks to the consumer. This is a fundamental protection within health product law, which would enable approved cannabis health products, like CBD, to be sold where other medicines are sold.

The strong interest in cannabis-derived health products represents an important opportunity to leverage existing laws. Mitigating the public health implications of recreational cannabis use should start with providing Canadians safe and effective cannabis derived health products where other medicines are sold.

To view our full policy position and additional recommendations please visit:

<https://www.chpcanada.ca/wp-system/uploads/2019/11/Canabis-position-statement.2019.pdf>

Media Inquiries:

Adam Gibson, Vice President of Public Affairs

T: 613.723.0777, ext. 228 | Email: adam.gibson@chpcanada.ca