

# PROVINCE LEAVES CITIES WITH CANNABIS QUESTIONS

Just as the Progressive Conservative government seemingly has been making up policies on the back of envelopes when it comes to health care, energy, transportation and finance, it comes as no surprise it is yet again changing the rules when it comes to legalizing pot sales.

**Municipalities have until Jan. 22 to decide whether to opt out of the program.**

First, it was eliminating the previous Liberal government's idea of creating a standalone entity called the Ontario Cannabis Store - modelled on the LCBO - to sell pot.

Then it introduced the idea of allowing private retailers to establish stores, including the decision to reduce the buffer of 500

metres to 150 metres for potential stores near schools and daycares.

Now as communities are in the midst of deciding whether to allow private pot stores within their boundaries, the Ford government in an announcement at the proverbial last minute is limiting the private retailers to 25, with six identified within the Greater Toronto Area, to be selected by a lottery in January.

Some municipalities have already opted out of allowing private cannabis stores within their borders, while others have decided they want in (including Milton, for now), and some have yet to decide (including Oakville, Burlington, Halton Hills).

Municipalities have until Jan. 22 to decide whether to opt out of the program.

For those that opt in, municipalities will be incurring enforcement costs to make sure these shops follow the rules. And the police and health departments will have to address the corresponding social problems that are expected to come from selling pot.

The province has committed to providing \$40 million to municipalities over two years to help with the implementation costs of recreational cannabis legalization. And if a municipality agrees to be a host city, it would receive additional funding. These are changing social times. Alcohol and pharmaceuticals are relatively accessible to the public with proper controls in place.

Cannabis is now a legal, recreational item, that is grown and harvested and is projected to boost the local economy. With the proper controls in place, private cannabis stores should have the same accommodation and be accessible to all adults.

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## HOW WILL CANNABIS LEGALIZATION IMPACT YOUR PET?

### ANIMALS NOT IMMUNE TO SECOND-HAND SMOKE, WRITES BURTIS



**BARRY BURTIS**  
Column

With the recent changes in cannabis legislation, veterinarians wonder whether there will be any impact on the frequency or severity of pets presented with marijuana toxicosis.

Marijuana (also known as weed, pot, reefer, grass, dope, ganja, Mary Jane, herb, skunk, etc.) consists of the dried leaves and flow-

ers of the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa*, *C. indica*). There are a number of distinct compounds in cannabis, but the primary psychoactive component is known as THC.

THC can also be incorporated in a variety of edible products such as cookies, brownies, candies (e.g. gummy bears), cereals and beef jerky.

THC is also used in a variety of human medications. Most owners would agree that the preceding list of items contains a number of things that - given the chance - their pets would willingly sample.

Marijuana intoxication in pets usually occurs after ingestion of the plant material, itself or marijuana edibles. Occasionally smoke from cigarettes is blown directly into a dog's face or nose. Mild intoxications may occur with inhalation of second-hand smoke.

Pets accidentally gaining access to a source of marijuana in their home has been seen by veterinarians for a number of years. However, with more relaxed usage of the product and because of wide variations in potency of marijuana plants, as well as in-

consistent quality control of THC in edibles, there is concern about possible increased health risks for pets.

Most commonly a marijuana-intoxicated dog is presented to a veterinary clinic showing signs of depression and lethargy or somnolence, with a lowered body temperature, a slow heart rate and dribbling urine.

However, clinical signs may also include vomiting, tremors, low blood pressure, disorientation, behaviour disorders, hyper salivation and vocalization. In some U.S. states with legalized marijuana, there are anecdotal reports of more serious clinical signs, including death.

It is suspected these signs may be the result of exposure to more potent forms of marijuana or their combination with other compounds. A pet with signs like those above should always be seen by a veterinarian.

The rule to remember is always to keep cannabis-containing products out of reach of pets.

*Barry Burtis is a retired local companion animal veterinarian*

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newsroom@theifp.ca  
IndependentAndFreePress  
@IFP\_11

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## CONTACT US

**The Independent & Free Press**  
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77  
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1  
Phone: 905-873-0301  
Classifieds: 905-234-1016  
Fax: 905-873-0398

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