

CITY OF
LANGLEY



Township of
Langley



Est. 1873

March 8, 2011

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health
458 Confederation Building
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

We as the Mayors of the City and Township of Langley are writing to you, with the support of our respective Councils, as a result of an issue which is becoming critical in every municipality across Canada. We believe that this requires your immediate attention and definitive action. Your government has taken a clear public stand that one of your major goals is to make our communities safer, but we are afraid that the current situation with respect to the issuance of medicinal marijuana licenses and the lack of adequate inspections, enforcement, controls and oversight on their implementation is a significant public safety issue.

We believe that the time for consultation is over and that action needs to be taken. While we understand that the original policy under the Controlled Drug and Substances Act was first introduced by the former Liberal Government in 2001 and then assumed by your government in 2006, we contend that changes need to be made immediately.

We have had ongoing feedback from all our public safety agencies that the current situation requires a new approach that will ensure that those individuals in need of medicinal marijuana have access to it, but in a safe and well regulated environment. The issues that have become clear are:

- We have no ability to know who has a license and where they are in our community;
- Our inability to regulate their standards and ensure that they are safe;

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- We know, based on actual cases, that there is significant misuse of many of the licenses and the volume of product produced often exceeds an individual's personal requirement;
- The size of the grows and number of plants, etc. is out of control and can result in potential home invasions, and other related criminal activity;
- We are sure that growing facilities in residential homes put the residents at risk and may cause long term health issues.

While we understand the rationale for providing the opportunity for clinical use of marijuana, we must reinforce that it has resulted in significant negative issues in our communities. It has created situations where neighbourhoods have become unsafe, individual lives have been at risk and the overall cost to our local governments has risen. Many local governments have petitioned their MPs for a change in policy that to date has resulted in little or no action by your department. It is our understanding that your officials concur that the policy is problematic and that changes should be made. Lack of action is unacceptable and we urge you to intervene immediately to resolve this situation. It is our contention that the solution is straightforward and easy to resolve. In the research we have done, it is clear that it simply requires a change in regulation, not a long drawn out legislative process.

With the foregoing in mind we are simply asking that the current licenses be cancelled and that any medicinal marijuana would in the future be dispensed through licensed pharmacies by doctor's prescription. As this is the practice for other controlled substances such as methadone, we do not see why this cannot be done for medicinal marijuana. We also urge that the marijuana that is dispensed be grown at a government regulated facility. In this way the quality and potency of the drug can be maintained at appropriate levels. We understand that this will require the expansion of current facilities and that a distribution system would need to be set up through the pharmaceutical industry, but those needs pale in comparison to the challenges we face through the current policy.

As two communities that have seen unregulated grow ops spring up without any regulation, we are raising the alarm bell with you and we challenge your government to make the necessary changes in order to ensure our communities are not subjected to the problems that we have already seen.

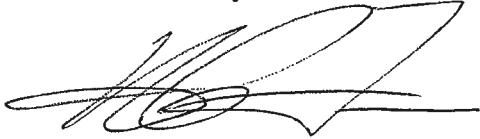
You should know that we intend to send a copy of this letter to every municipality in British Columbia through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and will also send it to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We will ask them to endorse this direction so that you and your government appreciate the depth and breadth of this problem across the country.

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We know that the public support this direction and want to see a resolution by your department and the Government of Canada.

In closing we want to assure you that this issue is not insignificant by any measure and we hope you will take the necessary steps to see it resolved.

Yours sincerely,



Mayor Peter Fassbender
City of Langley



Mayor Rick Green
Township of Langley

cc: The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Mark Warawa, MP, Langley
Hon. Rich Coleman, Solicitor General, Province of BC
Hon. Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Families, Province of BC
Hon. Colin Hansen, Minister of Health, Province of BC
UBCM Member Municipalities
Federation of Canadian Municipalities