

Letter to Minister of Health from Canadian MP's re: Access to Psilocybin

March 21, 2022

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

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Re: Urgent need for medical psilocybin regulations

Dear Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos,

In August of 2020, a number of us MPs wrote to the Honorable Patty Hajdu regarding 4 constituents who were seeking exemptions to Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) to use psilocybin as an end-of-life palliative treatment. These patients received the first-ever psilocybin exemptions for personal medical use since psilocybin was made a controlled substance in 1974, and received hugely life-changing benefits. In addition, Mrs. Hajdu granted the first 19 section 56 exemptions for healthcare professionals seeking experiential training so they may learn, hands-on, in addition to didactic training, how to best treat their exempted patients. Thanks to Patty's intervention, at least 68 patients and practitioners have received section 56 exemptions for this life-altering treatment and training when they needed it most.

Psilocybin has proven to be an effective tool for those suffering from end-of-life anxiety due to a terminal diagnosis, and the word is spreading. TheraPsil, a non-profit organization based in Victoria which helps people, including our constituents, access legal psilocybin therapy, has been overwhelmed with an influx of requests for this treatment option for both palliative and non-palliative patients who seek to use or are currently using psilocybin for their treatment-resistant health conditions.

Currently, dozens of patients are waiting for compassionate access through section 56 exemptions. Many of these patients with a terminal diagnosis, painful cluster headaches, addiction, and a variety of mental health issues for which

psilocybin may be effective for, have been waiting months. Some patients have had to wait over 330 days for a compassionate response to their reasonable request for relief, and others are currently exploring how to take their requests to the courts so that this does not happen again. In addition, for the patients who continue to get section 56 exemptions, there is an insufficient number of medical professionals who know enough about psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy to be able to meet the requests to use it. TheraPsil has supported over 150 health care practitioners to apply for section 56 exemptions for training purposes, there have been no exemptions for doctors and therapists for a year now and the organization's members feel at a loss in their efforts to help patients who are desperate for relief. 86 of these clinicians have been sent a letter of intent to deny their exemptions by Health Canada and are counting on you to respond to these exemptions with compassion and with the interest of patients in mind.

As psilocybin becomes more widely accepted and used as a treatment, medical professionals and patients need compassionate, safe, and regulated access to psilocybin so that they can better support the growing number of patients who wish to access this treatment option. At present, the ad-hoc process of section 56 exemptions lacks transparency, safety, and most importantly compassion. Some patients watch their peers gain approval, while they are left to wait, others have died before their exemptions are approved, and all patients who do receive their section 56 exemption must obtain their psilocybin from an unregulated and illicit market.

Minister Duclos, we are looking to you for leadership and compassionate response to these Canadians in desperate need of psilocybin regulations. We believe that Canada can and should take a stance on Medical Access to Psilocybin and create regulations that ensure safe, transparent, and compassionate access to this effective treatment option for those who are treatment-resistant and have a doctor's support, along with healthcare professionals enrolled in psilocybin-therapy training programs, for educational purposes.

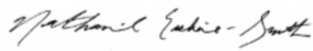
The undersigned Members of Parliament ask that you urgently commit to this request for amendment and to a permanent solution to medical psilocybin regulations that allow for safe, transparent, and compassionate access for patients and health care practitioners in need.

Advocacy organizations like TheraPsil and MAPS Canada are eager to work with your government to ensure regulations meet the needs of doctors, patients, and the many organizations committed to providing safe access to psilocybin.

This issue is urgent and we seek your help in providing immediate support for the Canadians who need compassionate access to psilocybin, without delay.

Signed,

Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, MP Beaches-East York, Ontario



Jenica Atwin, MP Fredericton, New Brunswick



Marcus Powlowski, MP Thunder Bay - Rainy River, Ontario



Laurel Collins, MP Victoria, British Columbia



Elizabeth May, O.C., Saanich-Gulf Islands, British Columbia



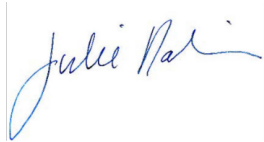
Gord Johns, MP Courtenay—Alberni, British Columbia



Alistair MacGregor, MP Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, British Columbia

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alistair MacGregor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Julie Dabrusin, MP Toronto-Danforth, Ontario

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Dabrusin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin blue rectangular border.

Arielle Kayabaga, MP London West, Ontario

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arielle Kayabaga". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "A" and "K".