



June 4, 2021

Cannabis Amnesty  
101-171 John St.  
Toronto, ON M5T 1X3

Attn: Mike McGuire  
Director, Cannabis Licensing and Security  
Health Canada  
Address Locator 0900C2  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

**RE: Black Entrepreneurship Cannabis Equity Program**

On behalf of Cannabis Amnesty, I would like to express our support for the proposed initiative of the *Black Entrepreneurship Cannabis Social Equity Program*.

Cannabis Amnesty is an independent, not-for-profit advocacy group focused on righting historical wrongs caused by decades of cannabis prohibition, particularly its impact on racialized communities. It was founded in April 2018 in response to the absence of federal legislation addressing the stigma of previous convictions for offences that would no longer be illegal under the *Cannabis Act*. Since then, it has campaigned for the government to enact legislation to delete criminal records relating to the simple possession of cannabis, launched public education campaign to fight the stigma associated with cannabis convictions and worked on criminal justice reform to make sure that the legal structures that allowed marginalized communities to be overrepresented in cannabis prosecutions are dismantled.

Prior to legalization, those arrested for minor cannabis possession offenses in Canada were primarily Black people or Indigenous people, according to data published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*. Post Legalization, Black people are still overrepresented amongst those arrested for the low-level possession (up to 30 grams) of cannabis.

A policy brief released Oct. 14 by the Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation and the University of Toronto looked at c-suite level executives, parent companies and licensed producers in Canada. The research reveals that two years after legalization, 84 percent of cannabis industry leaders are white and 86 per cent are men. The report found that only 2 percent of industry leaders are Indigenous, and just 1 per cent are Black.

The Canadian cannabis sector is a complex ecosystem of regulators, licensed producers, retailers, auxiliary businesses and allied professionals. The contribution of the cannabis sector to the economy is substantial and the sustainability of the industry is critical to Canada's annual GDP (\$9.68 billion in 2020) and future recovery efforts of Covid-19.

On behalf of Cannabis Amnesty, I am writing to request serious consideration and offer support for the Proposed *Black Entrepreneurship Cannabis Social Equity Program*. We ask the Federal Government / Health Canada to consider the following recommendations:

1. **Licensing Support:** Implement licensing support/Indigenous navigator program into the existing Black Entrepreneurship Program
2. **Mentorship:** Solicit and strategically implement access to mentorship from volunteered licensed producers and retailers.
3. **Presence and voices at the table:** Expressly include Black/POC owned cannabis businesses and professionals to the discussion. Consultation will ensure that the needs of Black Canadian professionals are explicitly addressed on Licensing framework, mentorship strategies, funding accessibility and program roll out within the proposed Black Entrepreneurship Cannabis Social Equity Program

We all recognize the burdens presented during these challenging times and encourage the Government to redouble its efforts to improve the lives of historically marginalized populations. One way would be to build a program that supports the Black/POC community to have access to and build business within the Canadian cannabis industry.

As a partner in seeking justice and equity in the Canadian cannabis industry, Cannabis Amnesty supports this initiative.

Sincerely,



Annamaria Enenajor  
Founder & Executive Director



<http://www.cannabisamnesty.ca>