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LCBO safest place to sell marijuana

CNW/ ? LCBO stores are the safest place to retail marijuana if Ottawa goes ahead with plans to legalize sales, the president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union says.

?If legalization happens, marijuana must be a controlled substance, and no one has more experience retailing controlled substances than the workers at the LCBO,? Warren (Smokey) Thomas said. ?The LCBO has a solid track record of responsibly selling alcohol and would bring the same service standard to marijuana.?

OPSEU's proposal is in line with recent statements by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger. Thomas called on the Prime Minister to involve the public health community in any discussion of legalization.

?If legalization goes ahead, there needs to be a strong regulatory framework in place, including minimum age limits, a ban on marketing, and a plan to prevent cannabis-impaired driving,? he said. ?If we let industry write the rules, we won't make any headway in reducing the social harm from marijuana.?

LCBO's secure warehouses and distribution system and world-renowned laboratory would also have a role to play if marijuana is legalized, Thomas said. Currently, the LCBO conducts more than 500,000 lab tests on alcohol products every year. These tests confirm that the products are safe to consume and meet the standards set out in regulation.

?All the infrastructure is in place for a smooth transition to a safer system,? Mr. Thomas said. ?There's no need to reinvent the wheel.?