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## Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates issue statement on Bill C-45, The Cannabis Act

TORONTO, Jan. 30, 2018 /CNW/ - As a national organization of provincial and territorial child and youth advocates, the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) finds Bill C-45, *An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts*, which takes effect in July 2018, concerning in a number of areas. The Council believes the legislation fails to adequately focus on, or protect, children from the potential harms of legalized cannabis and makes the following recommendations regarding the Act's regulatory roll-out across the country.

**We recommend** that the harmful effects of cannabis be addressed by setting potency limits for cannabis by either federal or provincial regulation and that cannabis quantities and potency be restricted for those under the age of 25. We also encourage federal, provincial and territorial governments to work together to ensure a consistent regulatory approach to cannabis, with the same age restrictions across provincial and territorial boundaries.

**We recommend** the establishment of sanctions for adults who supply children and youth with cannabis via a strict and escalating system of penalties, similar to what is in place regarding the sale of tobacco in some jurisdictions.

**We recommend** federal regulations stating that cannabis products cannot be sold in retail outlets that children and youth are permitted to enter; must be sold only in outlets that are highly monitored and controlled; and must use plain packaging rather than child friendly packaging. Packaging should also contain information on potency and potential harms, similar to packaging requirements for tobacco.

**We recommend** that retailers be subject to restrictions on the sale of cannabis in any form that could be attractive to children, such as lollipops or other candies.

**We recommend** that a specific percentage of taxes collected from the sale of cannabis products be prescribed in legislation to support research, public education, monitoring, harm reduction and treatment of cannabis-related issues.

**We recommend** that retailers be subject to restrictions on promotional signage, hours of operation, days of sale, density of outlets and proximity of outlets to schools and other places where children and youth are likely to gather.

In addition, the CCCYA is concerned about Bill C-45 regarding criminal offences for cannabis possession as they relate to youth. The legislation makes it an offence for youth to possess more than five grams of cannabis but, for adults, an offence only occurs with possession of 30 grams or more. While the CCCYA supports the objective of reducing youth exposure to cannabis, we have concerns that this could lead to the heightened criminalization of youth. The enforcement of cannabis regulations should be treated similarly to current regulations related to tobacco and alcohol; criminalization of youth could be avoided through non-criminal sanctions such as ticketing or confiscation.

The concerns and recommendations contained in this statement were conveyed by the CCCYA to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Council of the Federation in a letter earlier this year.

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***About the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates***

*The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an alliance of legislatively mandated advocates for the rights of children and youth. These advocates may operate under various titles (e.g. Advocate, Representative, Ombudsman, Commissioner), but all are official representatives in their particular provinces and territories. All CCCYA members are independent statutory officers who report directly to the Legislative Assembly of their respective jurisdictions. Each CCCYA member office is established by legislation to operate in a manner that is independent from government authority or control. Council includes members from the nine provinces and two territories of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Ontario, Québec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon.*