



June 2, 2020

To whom it may concern,

As the Executive Director of Wyndham House, an agency that works daily to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness I am writing to express concern regarding plans for a cannabis retailer scheduled to open beside the new children’s mental health center in Guelph. While I recognize that cannabis is legal, it is not legal for youth, and has serious and lasting repercussion for those with mental illness, and especially for youth and young adults. It is my understanding that this application poses an interesting issue. On one hand, we advocate for safe consumption practices when it comes to substances. And a regulated market in Ontario provides rules and standards on the production and sales of cannabis that do not exist in the black market. However, I am wanting to include my voice with CMHA Waterloo Wellington’s opposition to this application. CMHA is planning a much-needed child and youth wellness hub next door to serve children, teens and young people up to 24-years old, which is being constructed specifically in the north end of Guelph where our data demonstrates are the highest needs in the City.

I am also mindful of evidence which suggests cannabis use can be harmful to a brain that is still developing, which is especially concerning given the age range of our clients at that location. Youth are at an increased risk as the brain is exceptionally susceptible to adverse effects during this stage of development. We in fact see the effects of addiction, and substance use including cannabis.

While I understand fully that children under 18 are not legally allowed to enter cannabis stores, having one next door to a wellness hub where youth may be receiving treatment for mental health and substance use behaviours creates a potential for influence. For those 19 over, the potential for influence is greater given they can legally buy cannabis and may indeed provide it to friends who are much younger. It is my hope that a more appropriate location for a cannabis retail store can be found, a location that is not directly beside a new youth wellness hub makes the most sense.

Respectfully,

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Executive Director,
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WORKING TO PREVENT, REDUCE AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

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