



June 1, 2020

City of Guelph Committee of Adjustment
Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall
1 Carden St.
Guelph, ON N1H 3A1

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a psychiatrist working with our first episode psychosis program at CMHA. I am writing to express concern regarding plans for a cannabis retailer scheduled to open beside our new children's mental health center. While I recognize that cannabis is legal, it is not legal for youth, and has serious and lasting repercussions for those with mental illness, and especially for youth and young adults. Even before legalization, Canada's youth ranked first for their use of cannabis worldwide¹, and this continues to be a daily concern for the clients we serve through CMHA.

It has been well recognized that cannabis use in adolescents increases the risk of developing persistent psychosis and schizophrenia^{2,3,4,5}. Cannabis use also decreases the age of onset by 2.7 years⁶, which in developing brains often translates to worse prognosis and worse overall functioning and achievement. Furthermore, continued cannabis in those with psychosis, schizophrenia and bipolar illness results in worse prognosis, more relapse, and a more severe symptomatic course^{6,7}. Cannabis is also known to cause psychotic episodes, of which 50% convert to schizophrenia⁸. In fact, of all licit and illicit substances, cannabis has the highest risk for inducing psychosis and schizophrenia. In my practice, I spend hours each day speaking with clients about their cannabis use, its impact on their psychosis and their overall functioning.

It is not only psychosis that is directly affected by cannabis. Its use in the developing brain has also been linked to increased risk of developing other substance abuse problems, worsened anxiety and depression, impaired neurological development, cognitive decline, diminished school performance, and diminished lifetime achieves¹. MRI imaging has shown lower brain volumes and structural changes¹.

Many of the folks in my program identify that their cannabis use has contributed to their psychosis and very much want to stop. However, cannabis addiction, like any other addiction, is a mental illness and it can be difficult to discontinue use. Our youth already have to learn to say no to their peers, and in some cases, their family. Our youth have to learn how to navigate triggers and develop healthy coping skills in place of their cannabis use. The sight and smells of a cannabis store visible each time a youth comes to receive treatment at CMHA would be a difficult and cruel trigger for them to endure. The basic tenets of addiction treatment would recommend that an individual avoid triggering situations, places, and people, especially in the first 90 days after stopping their substance of choice (as the first 90 days have the highest risk of relapse).

Lastly, I would point out the Government of Canada guidelines prohibit promotion of cannabis to youth⁹. The very nature of having a cannabis storefront, clearly visible each time a youth arrives for their mental health appointment, will at the very least result in repeated reminders and a subversive advertisement that cannabis is legal, acceptable, and available. We know that youth are the most susceptible to advertisement, and even without posters or pictures, the mere existence of a storefront will act as an advertisement to youth. In the same way our cities would never consider allowing a cannabis store to

open beside an elementary or high school, I urge you to consider the similar harmful implications this store will have on our most vulnerable youth in Guelph.

I will end by quoting subsection 17(6) of The Cannabis Act and Cannabis Regulations⁹

“It is prohibited to promote cannabis, a cannabis accessory or a service related to cannabis under subsection 17(6) of the Cannabis Act by displaying a brand element of cannabis, of a cannabis accessory or of a service related to cannabis on any thing that is in a school, a public playground, a daycare facility or any other public place frequented mainly by young persons *or that is visible from such a place.* (section 104.19 of the Cannabis Regulations)”⁹, italics mine.

Thank you,



Dr. Alexandra Paventi Douglas, M.D. FRCP(C)

Psychiatrist for 1st Step Early Psychosis (KW & Cambridge), CMHA Waterloo Wellington
Assistant Clinical Professor (Adjunct), Department of Psychiatry, McMaster University.
485 Silvercreek Parkway N. Unit 1
Guelph, ON N1K 7K5

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