

June 4, 2021

Margaret Misek-Evans
Chief Administrative Officer
Town of Tecumseh
917 Lesperance Rd.
Tecumseh, ON N8N 1W9

Town of Tecumseh consideration to opting in to Retail Cannabis Sales/Stores

Dear Ms. Misek-Evans:

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) is writing to provide a public health perspective to assist with Council's decision of whether or not to opt-in to allowing retail cannabis stores in the Town of Tecumseh, during the meeting on Tuesday, June 8, 2021.

The WECHU recognizes that the decision to allow cannabis retail is a complex one, whereby cannabis is a legal product and may provide some economic advantages for the Town; however, since the legalization of recreational cannabis in October of 2018, the health and social risks from cannabis use remain, and the rates of cannabis use continue to increase. Within the current public health landscape, it is also worth noting that the social and economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have also significantly increased the use of substances, including cannabis. The sale, promotion, and use of cannabis also comes with the risk of several harms, especially for vulnerable groups such as youth, and those already suffering with mental health and substance use issues. The current system in Ontario for the approval of cannabis retail stores has minimal safeguards in place with respect to the location and number of retail stores allowed in a community, and affords very little power to municipalities in decision making related to location and density.

At the current time, the WECHU maintains its recommendation that local municipalities opt-out of retail cannabis stores, until additional authority is granted to municipalities around location and density of retail outlets. Should the Town of Tecumseh decide to opt-in however, the WECHU will provide support to mitigate the harms associated with cannabis use by continuing community education around the harms of legal but unsafe products like cannabis, enforcement of the *Smoke-free Ontario Act, 2017*, and through advocacy to all levels of government that additional protections be put in place.

The Province of Ontario has established minimum restrictions regarding the locations of cannabis businesses in our communities. The 15-day feedback period through the AGCO is the only current measure given to municipalities and residents to have a role in determining suitable locations for cannabis businesses. Objections are only permitted to be received by the AGCO from a municipality or resident, and will not be received from other organizations such as the local public health unit. The single provincially-imposed limitation related to locating cannabis retail stores under the *Cannabis License Act* is a 150m buffer distance between the store and any school or private school, with no other allowances for local government to put other restrictions in place such as buffer distances from additional sensitive land uses (e.g. daycares, playgrounds, and mental health and addictions facilities). In fact, municipalities are currently prohibited from using licensing or land-use by-laws to control the placement or number of cannabis retail outlets. Municipalities are permitted to put in place a policy statement which may recommend further protections to identified sensitive land uses or vulnerable populations. Policy statements have been put in place for a number of Windsor-Essex municipalities; however, the AGCO does have final approval of all applications.

The cannabis market in Windsor-Essex is developing at an extremely rapid pace, with the number of cannabis retail outlets already exceeding the number of liquor store outlets. In the City of Windsor, there are 40 authorized or pending retail stores (22 have been authorized to open as of June 2, 2021) relative to five dedicated Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) stores. The breakdown for other municipalities is outlined below:

- Amherstburg – 2 authorized to open, 1 pending (1 LCBO location)
- LaSalle – 3 pending (1 LCBO location)
- Lakeshore/Belle River – 3 authorized to open (1 LCBO location)
- Essex/Harrow – 2 authorized to open, 1 pending (1 LCBO location)
- Kingsville – 2 pending (1 LCBO location)
- Leamington – 1 authorized to open, 2 pending (1 LCBO location)
- Tecumseh (1 LCBO location)

Please note, a map of current and pending cannabis retail stores in Windsor-Essex County can be viewed on the [AGCO website](#).

Should the Town of Tecumseh decide that it is in the best interest of the community to allow for cannabis retail, the WECHU recommends that the Town implement a strong policy statement which expands upon the limited restrictions implemented by the province. Such a policy statement could advocate for an increased setback from schools, for example, and include setback criteria from other sensitive land uses such as libraries, parks, recreational centres, youth-serving facilities, and mental health and substance addiction treatment centres. Creating an approved policy statement would also allow for administration to easily and quickly provide feedback to the AGCO, based on a set of council approved criteria. In addition, if cannabis businesses are expanded to include consumption lounges or cafes, having a policy statement in place will continue to provide the ability to quickly respond to such applications and ensure that the location does not cause inequitable harm to vulnerable community members.

If the Town of Tecumseh opts-in to cannabis retail, the WECHU could provide consultation on the development of a policy statement, and support feedback submissions to the AGCO through informational reports. The WECHU would also support any knowledge and awareness activities of the Town of Tecumseh, to educate residents of the potential harms and safer use strategies for cannabis.

If you would like to discuss these recommendations further or require additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration,



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