

October 30, 2023

Dear Honorable Council Members,

My name is Varun Bhardwaj, I am writing to you today with respect to the matter of allowing legal cannabis retail storefronts within the city of Vaughan. Firstly, I would like to thank you for taking the time today to hear from members of the legal cannabis industry as well reading the submissions being presented to you by myself and others. Members of Council, I am writing to you as not only the founder of a legal cannabis retail brand, Terps & Rec Cannabis, located at 106-127 Westmore Drive, Etobicoke, Ontario, just 5 minutes from the Vaughan/Toronto border, I am also writing to you as a concerned father, a son of parents who reside in York Region and as an individual who grew up in York Region, attended youth programs such as Air Cadets and went back to volunteer his time back to the Cadet organization, all within York Region, and some within Vaughan itself.

Honorable Members, some of the main purposes of the legalization of Cannabis was to eliminate the illicit Cannabis trade, and to keep Cannabis out of the hands of children. This past summer, my son who is 13 years of age, and resides primarily with his mother in Richmond Hill was given illegal cannabis edibles from a friend of his, he consumed these illegal, unregulated edibles and was subsequently taken to hospital. As those of you who are parents can imagine I was horrified that this happened to my child, I was angry that my child or any child for that matter was able to procure cannabis products when I spend my days at my business ensuring that no persons under the age of 19 are permitted to enter. The employees that work for me are constantly trained to check the IDs of every customer who appears to look below the age of 25. The existence of legal cannabis retailers within a municipality greatly reduces the existence of an illicit market. The street deals and delivery services face a drop in profitability and the Police are further able to distinguish between legal and illegal cannabis sources.

Council members illegal cannabis shops have taken notice of the fact that Vaughan has not yet opted into legal cannabis retail and as such they have set up stores directly next to popular traffic areas that border the city of Vaughan, there are illegal stores that operate just south of Steeles Avenue, and just West of Highway 427 on Highway 7, they have realized the citizens of Vaughan do not have the option to buy cannabis legally and as such they have deemed it lucrative to set up around the borders of Vaughan and then offer delivery services into the region.

Legal cannabis retail provides greater job opportunities for citizens of Vaughan, I myself employ 3 individuals and I know my fellow retailers usually have 2-3 employees on staff, in these uncertain economic times it is important to provide the people with job opportunities and further sources of income.

I respectfully and humbly request that the Honorable Council Members vote in favor of Cannabis Retail Storefronts in the City of Vaughan, allow our youth to be safe from those that find profitability in selling to them, allow citizens a safe and professional experience when they are purchasing and allow the city to increase employment opportunities for its citizens.

Regards,
Varun Bhardwaj
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