

**Isfeld, Lori**

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**From:** Sandy Currie s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 13, 2015 2:39 PM  
**To:** Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office  
**Cc:** s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Subject:** Marijuana dispensary hearings submission

Dear Mayor & Councillors

Thank you for hosting these public hearings. I have been watching all the speakers online & am really appreciating the excellence of this process, as well as the education I am receiving. Instead of presenting in person, I am writing a submission while watching these proceedings online.

I have a Master's degree, MA in Counselling Psychology from UBC. I am a Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC) and a Professional Member of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. I have a private counselling practice now but was a counsellor with Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) for 10 years, offering Mental Health & Addiction services to those with alcohol & drug & problem gambling issues until 2004. During this time we worked closely with the approaches suggested by our coroner and later Mayor Larry Campbell. At FSGV we were in support of the 4 pillars approach.

I view medical marijuana as a harm-reduction drug, including being useful for treating relapse prevention to far more dangerous substances, such as alcohol, heroin, or cocaine. With this in mind, I object to the proposed regulation that would keep Dispensaries out of the Main & Hastings / DTES neighbourhood. Disadvantaged individuals there are often disabled and cannot travel outside their neighbourhood, due to disability or reduced finances. Ingestion of cannabis in edibles, oils, etc., IS the harm – reduction approach, as opposed to smoking. I think from the presentations at these hearings we can see that edibles are imperative to the public health & safety of both patients & the public. As a speaker suggested, a person can take their medicine without others knowing about, which is not possible if patients are limited to smoking. As well, dispensaries must be allowed to deliver products via mail, as so many, many patients need it and have relied.

During the campaign to have a Marijuana Referendum, I became a volunteer collecting hundreds of signatures in my area, Point Grey, as well as at many of the skytrain stations during our campaign. I have visited 5 or 6 dispensaries in my neighbourhood & on Granville Island to ensure they know of these hearings.

I live near the dispensaries between Alma & MacDonald on 4th Ave & on Broadway. I do not agree with the resident of the area who is fearful about "children's safety" and the proximity to schools. I have seen no change as to safety on the streets in this area, there are no people smoking near these dispensaries. Green Options next to Prussian Music is underground where The Jazz Cellar used to be. The Wolf & Hound has a liquor consuming patio next door to Prussian Music – the stairwell to Green Options goes down discreetly between the Wolf & Hound outdoor patio & Prussian Music. In fact, there are patios serving liquor along these very streets that this resident is citing! Bars emptying out at night are far more disruptive and a threat to public safety. Is that speaker concerned that children walking past the Wolf & Hound or Displace are seeing people drinking beer outside on the patio, too?

I do not agree that there needs to be a 300 metre limit from good neighbours, such as Vancouver Dispensary Society of Dana Larsen & Dori Dempster, usually referred to as "THE Dispensary", who are the 3rd non-profit dispensary here in Vancouver, and have operated without incident since 2008 or so. This dispensary serves the people of that area and is one of the more stable storefronts there, while others come & go. Ray Cam is their neighbour, and it would not help the neighbourhood in any way to force them to move. In fact, that would likely cause more harm to the area, if this stable business goes elsewhere. In my experience, with this dispensary, you would never know it is there, there is no activity on the street there since Jim's Weeds got shut down.

I agree with Dr. Nadine Gourkow, Director of CannaClinics, that the non-profit societies should be put in the queue, with earliest & established dispensaries, being licensed first. I personally worked with Dr Gourkow at the BCSPCA and have the

utmost respect for her research practices and standardized procedures. Knowing that she is a founding director of CannaClinic with 7 clinics, I feel very confident that this non-profit society should not have to close any of their dispensaries due to limits on number of licenses.

With regard to licensing fee, after seeing that the normal license fee in city is \$133, pharmacies paying somewhere between that and liquor stores paying \$700. These early non-profit societies such as BC Compassion Club, Green Cross, Vancouver Dispensary Society [www.cannabisdispensary.ca](http://www.cannabisdispensary.ca), and CannaClinic ought to only pay a licensing fee of other equivalent non-profits providing services to citizens. Non-profits & for profit pop-ups should be distinguished from one another, with non-profits paying a low licensing fee between \$133 - \$700. Non-profits should be considered on the basis of years of operation and history, etc.

With regard for co-locations, I have personally visited the Village Café & Dispensary near Granville Island. I think this particular café should be allowed to continue, whether or not other businesses of this type are permitted in future. Both presenters from this dispensary, Jeremy and Andrea, were very knowledgeable.

With regard to ATMs, I think people have made good arguments for allowing them. As one speaker mentioned, Marijuana is not Gambling. While I agree that casinos should not have ATMs, I think this is misdirected in the case of dispensaries. ATMs should be allowed.

With regard to children being allowed to go in with their parents, this should be allowed. I remember kids were not allowed in liquor stores, now I see them there with their parents. As one speaker said, "Can't tie kid outside, like a dog"

Obviously, child patients need access to these medicines, and dispensaries should be allowed to offer tinctures, oil, or edibles to children. CBD is not a psychoactive drug, and much research has shown that some children's chronic or long-term problems are only responsive to cannabis.

I commend the City of Vancouver for the reasonable common-sense approach being taken here by engaging the public in hearings. Vancouver has always been a leader in Harm Reduction approaches. I would also like to commend the amazingly reasonable approach that the Vancouver Police Department has been instructed to take.

I am so pleased that I live in this very progressive city!

Yours truly,

Sandy Currie, MA, CCC

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