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May 4, 2018

Mr. Kieron Testart  
Chair, Standing Committee on Government Operations

Mr. Shane Thompson  
Chair, Standing Committee on Social Development

**Re: Bill 6: Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act**

Dear Mr. Testart and Mr. Thompson,

The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce has been regularly engaged with the Government of the Northwest Territories regarding the upcoming legalization of cannabis. We were pleased to have an opportunity to make an oral submission during your May 3, 2018 Public Meeting in Yellowknife, NT and would like to provide a written submission outlining our formal position and recommendations.

As per our November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 letter to Minister Sebert, we agree that the minimum age for the purchase, consumption and possession of cannabis should be set at 19 years, and we agree that the NWT possession limit should match the federal possession limit at 30 grams. But, we strongly disagree with the proposed retail model. Our formal position is that if licenses are going to be issued for cannabis retail, Yellowknife entrepreneurs should have the opportunity to apply for those licenses and demonstrate that they can operate within the chosen regulatory framework.

We've been told that the proposed legislation won't prevent the future sale of cannabis in "cannabis only" stores, but if the GNWT intends to open the market up to entrepreneurs, they should have a firm timeline for doing so. "Maybe later" is not good enough for business planning purposes.

We recommend a model similar to Alberta, where cannabis will be sold at private retailers but where the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission will be responsible for online sales. This allows the government to have some form of control on product pricing, which will help eliminate the illegal market. This will also allow our community to reap the economic benefits associated with private cannabis retail, such as filling vacant retail spaces, creating new jobs and driving foot traffic to downtown areas, benefits that are already being seen and well documented in Alberta.

Further to our November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 letter – we are disappointed to see that consumption of cannabis in designated establishments will not be permitted. Regulated indoor spaces where adults can consume



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cannabis are common in other jurisdictions where recreational use is permitted and can provide additional economic opportunities for our community. We recommend a system that gives individuals the option to consume cannabis at regulated, adults-only cafes.

We ask that the Government of the Northwest Territories consider an approach that supports small business growth and economic diversification in Yellowknife, and across the Northwest Territories. Demonstrate that you have confidence in our vibrant business community and local entrepreneurs – who are more than willing to comply with all regulations that the territorial government deems necessary. We are confident that together, we can create a thriving and responsible craft cannabis sector that prioritizes health and safety across the Northwest Territories.

Respectfully submitted,

Deneen Everett  
Executive Director  
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Mike Lalonde  
President  
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

