

Air quality, odour, health and equity: Leveraging interdisciplinary approaches to understand the impacts of cannabis cultivation in Metro Vancouver



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In 2018, Canada became the only G7 nation to legalize cannabis for non-medical (recreational or non-prescribed uses) and medical use at the federal level. To date, there are over 500 facilities with licenses to cultivate cannabis. Of these, almost 25% are located in British Columbia, with some of the largest cultivation greenhouses being located or developed in the Metro Vancouver region. As the number and size of cannabis cultivation facilities (CCFs) have grown, so have odour-related complaints; a report from March 2019 listed 326 complaints in Metro Vancouver over a 12-month period. The odours associated with CCFs are caused by emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can also increase formation of health-damaging pollutants such as ground-level ozone (O₃) and particulate matter (PM). As such, air quality regulators have begun exploring options to curb these emissions. In this talk, I will highlight ongoing work in the Metro Vancouver region to understand CCF emissions from an interdisciplinary lens. This includes the development and deployment of a citizen science web application for reporting CCF odours and observed health effects (<https://www.smell-vancouver.ca>), modelling of odorous emissions and their dispersion, and plans for real-world ambient sampling of emissions from CCFs using mobile monitoring. The talk will also provide a high-level summary of identified knowledge gaps in our understanding of the air quality impacts of CCF facilities from the occupational to community scale.

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