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Getting answers on cannabis

A Nunavut pot primer with three-and-a-half months remaining until legalization

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In June, the Government of Nunavut passed its cannabis **legislation** - Bill 7 - and the **federal** government passed its own - Bill C-45 - paving the way for legalized marijuana as of Oct. 17.

In Nunavut, cannabis will initially be available by mail order from the south, then through the Nunavut Liquor and Cannabis Commission and, eventually, through private stores that are granted licences.

The GN will pocket 75 per cent of marijuana tax revenue while the remaining 25 per cent will go to the **federal** government.

However, there are many other details that still have to be worked out. Among them:

Can public housing tenants smoke weed at home?

Essentially, yes.

"Once the use of cannabis has been legalized, it will be possible, in units where there are no lease restrictions on smoking, for tenants to smoke cannabis," stated Stephen Hooey, acting president of the Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC).

Hooey noted, though, that tenants cannot allow their smoke to be detectable in common areas of a building or in neighbouring units. He added that damage caused by smoking is not considered normal wear and tear, so the NHC and local housing authorities will work with tenants on how to limit damage.

Will communities be able to block legalized marijuana through plebiscites?

No.

The Nunavut Association of Municipalities (NAM) was seeking that ability, but it won't be realistic due to online orders that will arrive by mail, said NAM president Madeleine Redfern.

"That was a pretty clear indication or message that communities would not be able to prevent cannabis from coming into our communities," Redfern said.

She added municipalities will at least have a say in the granting of licences to any cannabis outlets that want to set up shop in communities.

How will legalized marijuana change workplace policy?

This is still in development. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission has drafted regulations to address workplace impairment but the Government of Nunavut has yet to approve them, according to Maggie Collins, WSCC's communications manager.

These new regulation will define impairment and ensure employees are "fit for work" - able to carry out their duties safely, Collins stated. Workers will be required to inform employers of any impairment, she added.

"An employer will be prohibited from permitting an impaired worker to enter or remain on a work site," said Collins.

Will Nunavut get an addictions treatment centre?

Maybe. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. has long called for one, including at its October 2017 annual general meeting in a resolution

addressing the impending legalization of marijuana.

In the **House of Commons** in May, Nunavut MP **Hunter Tootoo** pressed Indigenous Services Minister **Jane Philpott** on the issue and she replied, "We have heard the call for a treatment facility in the territory and we have funded a feasibility study to that end..."

Tootoo later stated that the **federal** government's recognition of the need is "a step in the right direction," and it will hopefully result in an in-territory treatment facility "sooner rather than later."

The feasibility study on territorial-based treatment that Philpott referenced is expected to be complete this summer, according to Edith Pedneault, spokesperson for the Department of **Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada**.

Did Nunavut Senator **Dennis Patterson** vote in favour of legalized marijuana?

No. Patterson was one of 29 senators who opposed Bill C-45 on June 19, but 52 senators supported it.

"What did I hear from the residents of Nunavut in my exhaustive tour? They said what Aboriginal people and leaders have told us from across the country, 'Why the rush? We are not ready,'" Patterson said while addressing the Senate. "Making this mind-altering drug more easily available and cheaper in our remote communities will be catastrophic, many people predict. I share this fear. There will be casualties. There will be mental illness. There will be brain damage. There will be deaths."

Can I smoke marijuana legally now?

Only if you have a federally-authorized medical certificate. The Nunavut Department of Justice recently circulated a reminder that it remains illegal to otherwise sell, buy, possess or use cannabis until **federal legislation** takes effect on Oct. 17.

"Doing so can result in criminal charges, serious penalties and potentially a criminal record," stated the department's news release.

Will a pot possession conviction remain on my record?

In light of the upcoming change in marijuana laws, it may not. **Federal** Public Safety Minister **Ralph Goodale** told CTV's Question Period on June 24 that the Government of **Canada** is considering whether it's fair for a historic conviction for something that will no longer be criminal to continue to haunt citizens. The pardon system will be re-examined, Goodale said, as a criminal conviction for marijuana possession can be a barrier to employment.

Photo: Recreational use of cannabis becomes legal as of Oct. 17. The GN and various agencies have been scrambling to get ready for the impacts.

Credit: Pixabay photo

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