

**GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 7-18(3): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 6: *CANNABIS
LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION ACT***

Background

On June 1, 2018, the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories enacted the *Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act*, which provides the legislative regime governing the sale and use of cannabis in the Northwest Territories once the federal legislation comes into force on October 17, 2018.

The development of Bill 6 required significant interdepartmental collaboration, and benefited from feedback received from Indigenous governments, community governments, other stakeholders and the public, during the course of an extensive engagement process conducted during the summer and fall of 2017. Bill 6 was introduced in the Legislative Assembly on February 28, 2018.

The Members the Standing Committees on Government Operations, on Social Development, and on Economic Development and Environment, formed a Joint Committee to review the bill. The Joint Committee undertook further engagement with residents of the Northwest Territories, which is documented in Committee Report 7-18(3). In addition to the motions to amend the Bill outlined in the report, the Joint Committee also made a number of recommendations that fell outside the realm of the legislative response to the legalization of cannabis. The GNWT response to these recommendations is set out below.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop a fully costed implementation plan for Bill 6, including multi-demographic public education, enforcement planning, and expected cannabis revenues; that this plan be returned to the committees for review prior to legalization day; and that the final plan be made available to the public.

GNWT Response:

The Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Interdepartmental Working Group is developing a cannabis implementation plan and will provide copies of that plan to committee prior to making it available to the public before October 17, 2018.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop curricula to

deliver evidence-based health and safety education respecting both cannabis and alcohol through the territorial education system.

GNWT Response:

The GNWT's focus is to educate and provide students, parents and educators with current, evidence-based information regarding cannabis use and youth. Recent research shows negative health campaigns are not successful with youth. Consultations with youth tell us they are looking for the facts in order to make well-informed decisions around cannabis.

A webinar was offered to all NWT school staff and students grades 7-12 in June, 2018. Hosted by health expert Dr. Rebecca Haines-Saah, this webinar focused on cannabis use and youth, and received positive participant feedback. Additional webinars with cannabis experts are being planned for October 2018.

Some Canadian educational jurisdictions are making minor changes to in the content of curriculum (adding cannabis explicitly where it was previously included in "other drugs") while others are providing resource packages to supplement current curriculum. The NWT uses the Alberta curriculum for most education programming, and will be following Alberta's lead on any changes to or supplementation of curricula.

The current NWT health curriculum is being renewed to a competency-based model. This new model will not focus on specific content but will instead rely on student-lead inquiry to develop competencies such as informed decision making and taking action for personal and community wellbeing. Students will have many opportunities to engage with topics relevant to cannabis education. For example, the learning areas of the draft Grade 4-6 curriculum provide students with opportunities to engage:

- Balancing Body, Mind, and Spirit each day
- Tending Close Relationships
- Evolving Body and Brain
- Embracing Challenges and Managing Risks
- Belonging to Communities

Research-based resources were supplied to all NWT education bodies in June of 2018 with a focus on cannabis use and youth and the effect of cannabis on the developing brain. A second set of resources was sent mid-August 2018 to ensure these are in place for the start of the 2018-19 school year. These resources, along with targeted messaging around cannabis for students, parents and education body staff, will also be posted on Education Culture and Employment's Curriculum Health Studies webpage and Executive and Indigenous Affairs' Cannabis webpage:

[https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/curriculum-and-school-list/health-studies,](https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/curriculum-and-school-list/health-studies)

[https://www.eia.gov.nt.ca/node/1315.](https://www.eia.gov.nt.ca/node/1315)

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories form an interdepartmental working group to prepare for the future regulation of cannabis based products, including high-potency cannabis products, and licensed establishments for cannabis consumption.

GNWT Response:

The Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Interdepartmental Working Group has focused to date on coordinating the development of cannabis legislation. Since the legislation received Assent, the GNWT has been focused on implementation issues, including the preparation of regulations. Participation in discussions on federal initiatives including the future legalization of edibles and other cannabis products is ongoing. It is of note that the *Cannabis Products Act* does not provide for licensed establishments to consume cannabis, although this could be considered during a review of the legislation.

Recommendation 4

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories form an interagency working group to address cannabis-related enforcement planning.

GNWT Response:

The Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Interdepartmental Working Group is well placed to work with other agencies as needed on cannabis-related enforcement issues, and is already making progress in this area to ensure the Northwest Territories is ready to commence enforcement issues when cannabis is legalized. The members of this group serve as contact points and can coordinate with the agencies and entities referenced in the Committee report, including environmental health officers, municipal enforcement, the RCMP, the NWT Association of Communities, and others.

Recommendation 5

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Government of Canada and other government partners to resolve outstanding questions on record suspensions for offences related to cannabis possession.

GNWT Response:

The federal government has indicated that it will examine the issue of record suspensions for offences related to cannabis possession after legalization has occurred. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale has indicated that the question of pardoning

individuals with criminal records for possessing marijuana will be pursued once the new cannabis legislation takes effect. As the federal government advances this work, the GNWT will participate in any resulting discussions or engagement required from provincial and territorial governments.

Recommendation 6

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop economic development programming to support northern entrepreneurship related to cannabis sale and production.

GNWT Response:

Legalizing cannabis has the potential to create a new sector in the NWT in which small businesses and entrepreneurs may participate. As entrepreneurs and businesses succeed locally, they contribute to regional economic growth, diversification and the sustainability of our economy overall. Through its available funding supports and business services, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) will continue to leverage its suite of economic development and business support services to assist local businesses, and the territorial economy, overall.

ITI is in the business of helping NWT businesses and the NWT economy to grow and prosper. If an NWT resident has a legal and viable business plan for cannabis sale or production and meets required qualifications, there are programs and services that can be accessed. ITI expects many to apply under the Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) policy. In addition, under the new Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a legal commercial cannabis growing operation would be eligible for funding just like any other commercial farming operation if it meets the funding criteria.

The process for becoming a licenced producer is regulated at the federal level with many requirements for large scale producers. Micro-cultivation and micro-processing licence options may be better-suited for NWT entrepreneurs who wish to become producers. The GNWT recognizes that the Northwest Territories, with its abundance of sunlight during the summer season, combined with cannabis' relatively high unit value and low shipping weight, may have significant cannabis production potential.

Recognizing that we are in the initial phase of cannabis legalization, the GNWT will continue to consider options and support opportunities for NWT entrepreneurs when it comes to cannabis-based businesses.

Recommendation 7

The Standing Committees on Government Operations and Social Development recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories consider specific spending targets for the disbursement of cannabis-related revenues aimed at

public education, public awareness, and public health research related to cannabis use; and that the Liquor Commission report on cannabis sales in its annual report.

GNWT Response:

The Liquor Commission will report on the annual cannabis sales in its annual report in a similar manner as it reports on liquor sales. This reporting will include a breakdown of sales by online and cannabis store location, and by product type.

Expenditures for cannabis-related programs, including those aimed at public education, public awareness, public health research, and community support and related enforcement, will be included in the annual GNWT budget and be voted on by the Legislative Assembly.