

# JAMES MUNRO TELLS THE LAWYER'S DAILY THAT B.C. MUST PLAY CATCH-UP ON CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

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**Category:** [News](#)

The clock is ticking towards the federal government's legalization of cannabis, and a legal expert says British Columbia has its work cut out for it as it moves to develop a provincial framework for regulating and selling the drug.

The B.C. government is currently holding [public consultations](#) through Nov. 1 in order to allow residents to share their views about the province's approach to legalization, with Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth saying it is "critical that we work together to ensure the legalization of non-medical cannabis results in safer, healthier communities."

In addition to the open public engagement process, the government is also seeking opinions from a representative cross section of British Columbians on their views concerning non-medical cannabis regulations, with a random telephone survey.

McMillan's James Munro, a Vancouver-based lawyer who serves as co-chair of the cannabis group, noted B.C. is a "unique jurisdiction" when it comes to regulating cannabis given the number of storefront operations in the province.

"It's important to note these operations are not licensed by Health Canada and under the current law they are illegal," he said. "Such operations are supplied by illegal growers and sell untested products and Health Canada has stated such products may be unsafe and a risk to children."

Munro told The Lawyer's Daily that the provincial government has acknowledged the underground production industry is one of the biggest challenges to regulating in British Columbia.

"This may help explain why B.C. has been late to the game in getting out its regulatory framework," he said. "Plus [Farnworth] has said the transition of government [after the 2017 provincial election] was a large reason for the short period for consultation. Other provinces have been thinking about this for months, and B.C. has to catch up very quickly."

Ontario has already revealed a number of proposed regulations for the legalization of cannabis, such as

restricting the minimum age of sale to 19, zero tolerance behind the wheel for certain drivers and having sales be handled by a subsidiary of the provincial liquor control board.

Munro said a government monopoly “could be in the cards for B.C.” but a more likely scenario is some type of hybrid system involving government-owned stores and private establishments.

“It’s possible that B.C. will consider a model that includes storefronts — but the biggest issue that B.C. is going to face is making sure the supply comes from Health Canada-licensed sources and the dispensaries follow the guidelines in Bill C-45,” he said. “The supply has to come from Health Canada providers, and to think differently is simple naïve.”

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