

The Straight Dope: Legalization of Recreational Cannabis and the Workplace



Starting in January 2018, the SCC was actively engaged in the public discussion around legal cannabis. Bill C-45, *The Cannabis Act* received Royal Assent on June 1, 2018 and after some delay, the Act came into full force and effect on October 17, 2018. Recreational cannabis is now legal nationwide. While cannabis legalization is expected to create exciting new business opportunities for the private sector, some employers are worried that it would bring a new set of workplace challenges.

The SCC's research and advocacy efforts centered on two important aspects related to cannabis. The first aspect concerned questions around the wholesale-retail market structure. The second was employer concerns around workplace

health and safety, particularly by those operating in safety-sensitive environments.

Not all SCC members believed legalization was the right course of action. However, the SCC viewed legalization as inevitable and as such, wanted to ensure that sound public policies were recommended and put into place. The SCC's research and advocacy work around cannabis legalization included the following actions:

- Submitting a joint letter with industry stakeholders to Minister Ralph Goodale recommending the Federal Government implement necessary adjustments to workplace safety legislation and regulations prior to legalization.

- Publishing a media release in January 2018 endorsing the Government of Saskatchewan's direction on recreational cannabis sales - a private wholesale and retail distribution model with robust regulatory oversight provided by the SLGA.

- Releasing a Backgrounder, *Legalization of Cannabis*, along with a helpful document, *Legal Cannabis and the Workplace: What Saskatchewan Employers Should Know* that outlined the rights and responsibilities of employers.

- Organizing a series of information sessions across the province in partnership with WorkSafe Saskatchewan, Miller Thomson LLP, MNP LLP, and select local Chambers aimed at employers from March – April 2018.

- Participating in stakeholder consultations around the issue of impairment in the workplace led by the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety (LRWS) in September 2018.

Post-legalization, the SCC will continue to monitor the situation as it unfolds and will be prepared to make additional policy recommendations based on member feedback as required.

Legalization