



WHAT WE HEARD

Consultations on Cannabis Legalization in Nunavut

Government of Nunavut
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Executive Summary

In 2017, the Government of Canada announced its plans to legalize the possession and consumption of cannabis across Canada by summer 2018. Under the proposed legislation, provinces and territories are responsible for making decisions and rules about the legalization of cannabis in their own jurisdictions on a number of topics.

The Government of Nunavut's (GN) main objectives are:

- Protecting the health and safety of Nunavummiut, especially youth;
- Providing for the safe distribution of cannabis to adults;
- Combatting the illegal market for cannabis in Nunavut; and
- Increasing awareness of the risks associated with cannabis.

The GN conducted public and stakeholder consultations with Nunavummiut from January to March, 2018 in eleven communities. Nunavummiut from across the territory were also invited to share their views through feedback forms distributed to health centres, income support offices, and Government Liaison Officers (GLOs). Feedback forms were also available online and could be sent to the GN's cannabis email address (cannabis@gov.nu.ca) or through the mail.

The main objective of these consultations was to engage Nunavummiut in the development of Nunavut's regulatory approach and identify areas of concern and potential for Nunavummiut related to the legalization of cannabis.

The following report presents a summary of what we heard from Nunavummiut during these cannabis legalization consultations. Every effort has been made to capture the diverse viewpoints provided by Nunavummiut. For clarity, this report does not reflect every comment; it focuses on the issues and perspectives that were most commonly shared across communities.

Acknowledgements

The Government of Nunavut (GN) wishes to acknowledge all individuals, communities, and organizations that contributed their thoughts, ideas, and personal experiences during the cannabis consultations.

Background

The Government of Canada intends to legalize cannabis across the country by summer 2018. Canada's *Cannabis Act* and regulations will establish rules about growing, producing, and selling cannabis products. If passed, these changes will have significant legal and policy implications for Nunavut and other jurisdictions.

The proposed federal laws allow provinces and territories flexibility to determine their own approaches on certain issues such as, but not limited to: the minimum age of purchase (as long as it is over 18 years), the retail distribution model, and home growing.

The GN needs to set up its own system to control cannabis within the territory. Recognizing the importance of engaging Inuit and other Nunavummiut in the development of major social policies, the GN consulted actively on the issues related to cannabis.

Public Consultation Process

In late 2017, the GN developed a proposal for how to control the sale and consumption of legalized cannabis in Nunavut, titled "*Regulating Cannabis in Nunavut: A Proposal for Consideration and Discussion*" (proposal). From late January to late March 2018, the GN consulted with Nunavummiut in 11 communities across all three regions of the territory.

The consultations were guided by the following objectives:

- Encourage communities, stakeholders, and interested parties to provide feedback on the development of the legislation and regulation;
- Ensure ongoing communication during and after the initial legislative process;
- Ensure the bill and its regulations support the policy objectives of the initiative;
- Encourage communities and stakeholders to identify their own priorities for cannabis legalization;
- Meet with individuals who represent a range of views, including those opposed to the initiative, to foster positive dialogue and hear their ideas and concerns; and
- Ensure this legislation supports priorities in the government mandate and reflects *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)* principles and Inuit traditional values.

The GN hosted public and stakeholder meetings in Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Kimmirut, Igloolik, Arctic Bay, Rankin Inlet, Arviat, Coral Harbour, Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, and Kugaaruk. These communities were selected as they offer a mix of small and large communities, regional centres, and different models under the *Liquor Act*.

In addition to the public meetings, Nunavummiut could also provide feedback by submitting a comment or letter by mail or to the GN's cannabis@gov.nu email account. Feedback could also be shared through other stakeholders, such as municipal governments. Feedback forms were

also made available at community health centres, income support offices, and through Government Liaison Officers (GLOs).

The Department of Health's Tobacco Reduction Team also visited communities in January and February 2018 as part of their work around tobacco, including Clyde River, Grise Fiord, and Pond Inlet. The team conducted additional focus groups with youth and parent groups in these communities regarding cannabis legalization.

The GN also sent a letter to the Mayor and Senior Administrative Officer in each community to inform them of the consultations and to invite them to share their views with the GN.

Topics discussed during the cannabis consultations included:

- The GN's core objectives;
- Health promotion and education;
- Minimum age;
- Personal possession limits;
- Home growing;
- Role of landlords and building owners;
- Public consumption;
- Role of municipalities;
- Cannabis establishments;
- Drug-impaired driving;
- Government control;
- Stores and online sales; and
- Advertising and packaging.

Overall, the GN consulted with a variety of individuals, groups and organizations. Some of these included:

- Elders;
- Municipal mayors and officials;
- Front-line health staff;
- Youth groups;
- RCMP;
- Teachers and school administrators;
- Community wellness committees;
- Local housing associations;
- Office of the Public Guardian;
- Nunavut Liquor and Licensing Board;
- Office of the Representative for Children and Youth;
- Local shelters; and other
- Community based organizations.

What We Heard

This section provides an overview of what we heard as part of the cannabis consultations. While this document does not include every comment, we have tried to reflect the diverse views Nunavummiut shared on the issues most commonly addressed across communities.

Government of Nunavut's Main Objectives

The GN's cannabis proposal document outlined four main priorities for the development of Nunavut's cannabis system:

- Protecting the health and safety of Nunavummiut, especially youth;
- Providing for the safe distribution of cannabis to adults;
- Combatting the illegal market for cannabis in Nunavut; and
- Increasing awareness of the risks associated with cannabis.

Most participants¹ spoke to their agreement with the GN's proposed main objectives.

"Agree with the GN's main objectives. Health, safety, marketing, and awareness."

– Arviat

One participant provided feedback on an additional objective for the GN to consider:

"If it is legalized here in Nunavut, Inuit Knowledge should be part of it."

– Arctic Bay

It is also important to note that a few participants voiced concerns about the effectiveness of the proposed objectives:

"When I look at your four objectives, those have been there for 40 years. Unfortunately, I am not very hopeful. I salute you for being hopeful."

– Iqaluit

"I'm stuck on that first point—protect the health and safety of Nunavummiut especially youth. I don't see enough there to protect youth. I only see the statement on minimum age. Maybe we need to have in here the role of social services, elders, education, justice,

¹ The term 'participant' includes all individuals and groups who provided feedback during the cannabis consultations. This includes public and stakeholder meetings, as well as feedback from comment cards and emails received to the GN cannabis email account.

health. We're going to have to do this. This is a good opportunity to do better. I don't see enough here. I see the intent but I don't see the meat of it here."

– Iqaluit

Supporting Healthy and Informed Choices about Cannabis

A significant majority of participants spoke of the need to increase knowledge and awareness of the health and social impacts of cannabis use, especially for children, youth, pregnant women, and other groups at greater risk of cannabis-related harms:

With increased knowledge and awareness, Nunavummiut can make healthier and informed decisions about their cannabis use.

"Countries who have legalized cannabis have reduced crime rates. The longer they have legalization the less use there is because education is going out. It all comes down to education. The number one priority should be educating people. To teach them the dangers but also the good parts of cannabis. It all comes down the education."

– Cambridge Bay

"The education piece is important as there is going to be a need for education around how to use it and we don't have enough time. Education for children is important because right now marijuana is illegal, but they will think it is okay to use once it becomes legal."

– Igloolik

"Awareness...we don't know anything about awareness, for people who take cannabis. We have no idea. Coming from childhood. Prevention is very important."

– Arviat

"I work with small children and babies. Are we going to have promotional information for people who use cannabis and are young moms?"

– Cambridge Bay

"If anybody can purchase cannabis it is probably going to be the young people in the communities. And we want you to realize that we need it to be looked over properly even though we hear sad stories about cannabis being used improperly."

– Cambridge Bay

Participants expressed their belief that most youth are not aware of the risks and harms associated with early cannabis use. Targeting health and educational messaging to appropriate age groups may help increase awareness.

“One thing about harm reduction we need to recognize is accurate and truthful continuum of information. From early age to old, we need programming that isn’t fear based.”

– Cambridge Bay

“Clear [i.e., address] long believed myths about marijuana.”

– Arviat

“Many kids say they use cannabis because everyone else does. Education, starting with elementary school and how it can affect them and moving on to high schools, would be very important. Recreational can be fine, but if use goes beyond that it creates problems for community and family as well.”

– Igloolik

“A lot of people are not in a place to make a responsible choice—education and health promotion can empower someone to make the choice to use for them.”

– Cambridge Bay

It is important for health messaging to be accessible and targeted, especially towards youth, and participants encouraged the GN to use a variety of platforms to ensure that this messaging reaches its audience:

“In terms of education, have you thought about approaching education for curriculum development? Providing information at a young age before they are teens is important.”

– Rankin Inlet

“There are some Nunavummiut who have no access to internet or TV. Radio is the best way to communicate.”

– Rankin Inlet

“Reach youth through the schools. Contacting principals and getting it out there. During the summer there is a workshops by youth themselves—get youth councils involved, get them through arts or ask them what they are interested in. Do something that is youth-

led. Youth can be stakeholders too. Ask them [youth] to do projects on cannabis and get them to present on their findings regarding the harms.”

– Arviat

“Come up with an app. Make an app and get it on their [youth’s] phones.”

– Arviat

“Programming must be Nunavut relevant and youth targeted...pamphlets won’t cut it! I have seen the approach with STIs and it is not efficient. Digital media, dynamic, balanced, evidence based messaging is key to engaging our high school students.”

– Iqaluit

Many community members expressed the need for more in-person education and awareness rather than print materials:

“Let’s not do a poster—that is really insulting, that is really paternalistic.”

– Rankin Inlet

“This [cannabis] is going to be open to all of Nunavut. Is there going to be a resource person hired in each community? Young ones are going to be learning all of this and seeing all of this.”

– Coral Harbour

“I think there needs to be something territorially where a huge crew of you guys come and talk to us at the same time as other communities. A territorial information session so that more people can learn about what is happening.”

– Cambridge Bay

“Let’s put the information more out there, let’s do a workshop, let’s establish something.”

– Kugaaruk

“I think it’s great that the conversation is happening because it’s already in the community, and there have never been conversations about it. It’s always been hidden, but now communities are being consulted because it’s becoming legal and allowing people to openly talk about it.”

– Igloolik

– Igloolik

A few participants shared their desire for health promotion and education to incorporate IQ:

“I work as an outreach worker; I go on the radio to discuss the effects of alcohol. And when I’m done, in the community I get a negative response...Even though we do give out information about the effects of mental health it seems that people don’t want to hear it. We need to use our IQ principles to convey information.”

– Cambridge Bay

Mental Health and Addictions

Nunavummiut spoke frequently about the access to and delivery of mental health and addictions services in the territory. Many participants asked questions and raised concerns about the impact of cannabis use on mental health and wellbeing:

“Have there been any questions about people who may suffer from mental illness and how cannabis can exacerbate that?”

– Cape Dorset

“Drugs do not make someone an addict. For someone to become an addict there has to be an underlying vulnerability. There is a lot of trauma here.”

– Kugluktuk

“We have said this many times that we need a mental health worker. We have shared this many times. I am not saying that we have to expect everything from the government but we need more resources in the community.”

– Kugluktuk

Participants expressed concerns regarding the availability and accessibility of mental health and addictions services and programming at the community level:

“My brother started using drugs at the age of 10... I tried to ask for help with social services and RCMP to see if I can send my brother to get help and they said no, he has to be the one to decide.”

– Coral Harbour

“We don’t have resources; we do not have a lot of mental health workers.”

– Kugluktuk

“Are mental health nurses prepared to help people who are facing cannabis related mental health impacts; will they provide time to deal with it?”

– Igloolik

“An addicted person does not have many options for obtaining help, yet we know there are many issues.”

– Rankin Inlet

Participants highlighted the need for more research on how cannabis use can impact mental health and addictions:

“I am wondering if there is any research that connects/link cannabis use to suicidal thoughts. When they are heavy users of cannabis and don’t have access to using what impacts this could have on them.”

– Rankin Inlet

“It would have been nice to have the federal government and GN do research and provide workshop[s] about how cannabis, alcohol, tobacco can impact the body [such as] training on tobacco products.”

– Kugaaruk

“Have Inuit specific health research, need more statistics or longitudinal study.”

– Iqaluit

Some participants questioned why cannabis is being legalized if it is known that it carries some risks associated with mental illness and psychosis especially when used early on by youth (See the following section on Minimum Age for Possession and Consumption for similar themes):

“I am disappointed as a community member; you say that this [cannabis] can cause mental health [issues] but then telling us that you are legalizing it.”

– Cambridge Bay

“It is as if the federal government is trying to get our children to use it because it is being legalized; led astray, eating up their brains.”

– Coral Harbour

Participants were clear about their desire for an in-territory addictions treatment facility:

“Nineteen years into the creation of Nunavut and the GN is still working on creating facilities for addicts. How many more years are we going to have to wait?”

– Coral Harbour

“We need a treatment centre that is open to everybody who is in need of assistance on social and trauma issues, this building is very much needed that can be accessed all day.”

– Arctic Bay

“We do not have a treatment centre in Nunavut. We need this first, either for alcohol, cannabis or any kind of drugs. This is what we need first. Because right now they have so many people in Nunavut. I would like to be able to see officially the first in NU addictions centre before cannabis is legalized”

– Rankin Inlet

“What is the GN plus the federal government doing to put in facilities, especially for those who have never left Nunavut before. We have to ship them all over, wherever there is a facility for a person who is crying for help. There is no traditional knowledge in these program. We are disconnecting them, hurting them even more. There is some anxiety involved, a lot of things involved when we ship people outside of territory for help. What are your plans for creating a facility in Nunavut.”

– Rankin Inlet

A few participants highlighted the need for more capacity, support, and resources for healthcare staff working in community health centres:

“We are just burning the [mental health] staff we have here. [It is] difficult to work without support... But they need support. They have a life themselves too; we don’t want them to burn out. It is important to balance things.”

– Kugluktuk

Minimum Age for Possession and Consumption

Most participants agreed that the minimum age for cannabis possession and consumption in Nunavut should be higher than the federal minimum age of 18. Many participants voiced that a minimum age of 19 would be appropriate, as it is the same to purchase alcohol and tobacco products.

However, a few participants clearly stated their preference for a minimum age of 21 (with prohibitions on potency until age 25). These participants argued that 19 is not an appropriate minimum age since research shows that cannabis use before age 25 (when the brain is fully developed) can interfere with healthy brain development

“Knowing how the brain develops and when it is fully developed at age 25, why is it being proposed that the age be 19? My oldest is turning 18 soon. I will be raising my hands up in the air. I can’t even comprehend the thought. With the risk of mental health issues, why is it being set at 19 when it would be safer if set at 25?”

– Arviat

“Your proposal identified 19. We are strongly opposed to this based on the CMA’s findings that brain development continues until about 25 years. We recommend setting the minimum age at 21 and controlling the potency of the product available to sell to people under age 25.”

– Iqaluit

Personal Possession Limit

The federal government’s proposed legislation set the personal possession limit at 30 grams of dried cannabis. Some participants expressed concern that the proposed 30 gram possession limit is too large of a quantity:

“Have regulations already been finalized? How was 30 g limit established? Is this per week/per month? 30 grams seems too much.”

– Coral Harbour

Many participants highlighted the need for a limit on how much cannabis can be stored in a household and/or how much cannabis can be ordered at one time or during a time period:

A limit on how much can be bought and how much can be stored would help those with no self-control.

– Kugluktuk

Youth Possession

Canada’s proposed laws will allow youth under age 18 to carry up to 5 grams of cannabis without facing criminal charges; most participants agreed with this proposal. However, many voiced concern that youth should face some form of penalty to deter possession and/or consumption in the future, such as having the cannabis in their possession taken away,

community service, or mandatory attendance at a workshop on cannabis and its health impacts:

“Regarding the 5 gram youth possession rule: decriminalization protects their future, but it’s also acknowledging that it’ll happen. It means kids will be using cannabis. Will the RCMP be able to follow up on this given that they have limited capacity in our communities?”

– Cape Dorset

“Youth should not be permitted to carry up to 5 grams without penalty. Any amount condones the use of cannabis by young people.”

– Arviat

Many participants expressed their concerns for youth possession and consumption generally—several shared stories of encountering children and youth using cannabis in the community:

“I drive a school bus. I notice children under 10 years old smoke cigarettes as soon as they are outside after school. I am worried that if it is no longer illegal then kids will use the cannabis cigarette butts. We know that it is only for people 19 and over to use but the kids are still using it.”

– Arctic Bay

“One of my main concerns is youth...with cannabis being kept in the home, it is more likely that children and youth will come to school high.”

– Kimmirut

“I’m wondering how I’m going to educate the kids in elementary school and how we are going to expose it to them. Are there strategies to normalize it? Or is it too early for them?”

– Igloolik

Home Growing Cannabis

The federal government’s proposed law would allow individuals to grow four cannabis plants per household. Most participants had concerns about the risks associated with home growing such as excess moisture in the home, mold, potential for fire, and exposure to children:

“Adults can smoke and grow plants in their home. How will the little ones be protected if they are already having issues with alcohol, tobacco, and now marijuana?”

– Cambridge Bay

“I oppose the home growth idea. I would rather see a greenhouse separate from the home because it can be hazardous. It is quite dangerous in front of children. It is quite dangerous for children’s brain—second hand smoke. It needs to be out there that second-hand smoke could be very dangerous for children in the home.”

– Kimmirut

“What about when there are kids in the home—will the home growing be different?”

– Arviat

“The lamps that are used to grow... can create humidity which could lead to mold. How will the Nunavut Housing Corporation deal with this health issue?”

– Kimmirut

However, a few participants also expressed the need for accessible and legal sources of cannabis as a source of harm reduction:

“In terms of harm, increasing access to cannabis may reduce harm by redirecting people towards cannabis and away from alcohol.”

– Iqaluit

“I like the way government [wants] to legalization cannabis. Thank God for growing cannabis... it is very much better than alcohol [because it] calms you down.”

– Kimmirut

Role of Landlords and Building Owners

Many participants noted that smoking cannabis in public housing units or multi-unit dwellings is a problem because of the smell and the ill health effects caused by exposure to second-hand smoke:

“Nunavut Housing Corporation can set the rules about smoking. The issue is when you move into units where smoking is taking place, you cannot get rid of the smell.”

– Cambridge Bay

“Please ban smoking (and tobacco) from multi-dwelling households and GN housing units.”

– Iqaluit

Public Consumption

Most of the discussions about public consumption were framed from the perspective that the health and safety of Nunavummiut, especially children and youth, should be protected. Most participants agreed that individuals should be allowed to consume cannabis in some public places in order to limit second-hand smoke exposure for children, youth, elders, and other people in the home:

“We already have an issue with cigarette smoking in public and on school grounds. When I bring my 6 year old daughter to school there are other kids around her that smell like marijuana... Even when we walk into this building, work buildings, there is always smoking. There are signs but no one pays attention to this. Are we now going to be walking through a cloud of cannabis?”

– Rankin Inlet

“There is overcrowding in homes. There needs to be clear rules about how or if cannabis can be used in the home so people have a safe place to go to.”

– Cambridge Bay

“We agree that smoking cannabis isn’t like smoking a cigarette. It has the problems of cigarettes combined with being an intoxicant. We agree with all the prohibited places listed in the proposal, but we want to include the home on that list. Smoking cigarettes is still ok in some of these places, yet Nunavut is the only place in the country where, for example, school staff can smoke on school grounds. So we have to address smoking cigarettes as well.”

– Iqaluit

“Designated smoking area for cannabis, how is that possible? We are already trying to have designated smoking areas for tobacco away from entrances.”

– Kimmirut

“Public housing and smoking cannabis is an issue [for] people who are sensitive to the smell and allergic to smoke. You can stay in your own yard if you own your house, but what about if you don’t own your home—many people share the same entrance/landing area. Come Fall 2018 you can’t say that cannabis is illegal anymore, so who will be

enforcing it if people are smoking or using cannabis in areas where they shouldn't be? It is already difficult to enforce the laws for tobacco."

– Arviat

Cannabis Establishments

Several participants spoke in support in favour of having cannabis establishments (places where cannabis could be consumed on-site, also called cafés or lounges) in their community. They agreed that an establishment could offer a safer place for individuals to consume cannabis outside of their homes, thereby reducing non-users' exposure to second-hand smoke:

"I would be happier if they built a house to smoke [the] weed [in]. Almost all my family, cousins, relatives smoke weed at my home... Enough is enough."

– Arviat

"Cannabis cafes sound amazing! It would be a safe indoor space to consume."

– Iqaluit

"There also needs to be designated areas where cannabis can be used outside of the home so people have a safe place to go to."

– Cambridge Bay

Prohibition and the Role of Municipalities

Participants were divided on the role municipalities should play. The large majority of stakeholders supported the GN's proposal to not allow municipal governments to prohibit cannabis entirely because, as they argued, the current alcohol prohibitions generally do not reduce alcohol-related harm.

"[There is] intoxication even in communities where it is prohibited. Even in dry communities there are problems with alcohol."

– Rankin Inlet

"What is going to happen with community restrictions? We know prohibition does not work."

– Cambridge Bay

"Alcohol and drugs are more abused in communities where there is prohibition."

– Kugaaruk

We need to look at the issue with cannabis; we need to somehow suppress it. I'd rather have prohibition, but it is not feasible so we have to look at how we can manage it better."

– Arctic Bay

"We know prohibition doesn't work up here, but how do we balance the attitudes of it being legal but also harmful."

– Clyde River

However, participants were often bothered by the fact that the decision to legalize cannabis was made outside of their community and that they may have no power to decide for themselves if legalization is the right approach. Many recognized the importance of having some sort of decision-making at the municipal level.

"Don't we have the authority to have a petition regarding this?"

– Coral Harbour

"[It] would be great if we could vote no on this just like alcohol. I want to cry because I don't want it to be legalized here."

– Coral Harbour

"We should be the one making the suggestions, not someone else telling us the suggestions. How can... if I am opposed to this, if I support prohibition, can I go through the Hamlet? How can I get support from the community?"

– Arctic Bay

Workplace Safety

Most participants noted that workplace safety is a concern to them. Many voiced that legalization might send the message that consuming cannabis during work hours and coming to work impaired is allowed:

"Who do I hire if all applicants are using? We all have lives after 5pm, but it is also important to note that you can't go out and make a fool of yourself being drunk or high—especially in this line of work [mental health and addictions]."

– Rankin Inlet

“One thing I forgot to mention is workplace safety. People might smoke while driving at work because it is legal.”

– Arviat

Drug-Impaired Driving

Impaired driving, whether by alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs, is a serious crime that puts the safety of Nunavummiut at risk. Participants agreed that drug-impaired driving should be taken seriously and that the established laws should also be extended to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles. Participants also noted the lack of enforcement capacity to deal with drug- and alcohol-impaired driving:

“Many laws are not followed or enforced. Many times people are driving drunk or impaired and only get caught when it is too late and there is an accident.”

– Cambridge Bay

“We need strict rules around impaired driving and workplace impairment. If we cannot measure impairment then that is a mockery.”

– Iqaluit

Enforcement

Regardless of what laws are established to regulate cannabis in Nunavut, participants voiced concerns about enforcement, specifically the capacity in Nunavut to enforce the proposed federal and territorial laws.

“Come Fall 2018 you can’t say that cannabis is illegal anymore so who will be enforcing it if people are smoking or using cannabis in areas where they shouldn’t be? It is already difficult to enforce the laws for tobacco.”

– Arviat

“There needs to be more capacity in each community to deal with enforcement, alcohol and drugs, mental health, health care. There are a lot of under staffed and over worked people.”

– Cambridge Bay

“Police enforcement is a big issue.”

– Rankin Inlet

Cannabis Potency and Availability

Some participants expressed that they want Nunavummiut to have access to the full range of cannabis products that are available to Canadians in the south. The reasoning behind this is that if the legal market only offers a limited range of products to Nunavummiut, the illegal market would not be reduced:

“There is still going to be a black market for products that aren’t sold by the government or the store. People will go for the products they like to use.”

– Rankin Inlet

In contrast, some stakeholders expressed that they hope the government places restrictions on high potency products being sold in Nunavut:

“We are now seeing the product called “Shatter” in Clyde... It is very concentrated THC with no [CBD]. We really should not allow the Shatter product to be legalized.”

– Clyde River

“Lower potency products would be better.”

– Cambridge Bay

Distribution and Retail

Generally, participants accepted the idea that the Government would be involved in the distribution of cannabis. However, many encouraged the GN to consider opening up distribution to the private sector as a way to ensure that communities benefit economically from the legal trade of cannabis. Indeed, some participants considered local stores as a way to bring jobs and profit into communities:

“I’d like to see the co-op and northern sell cannabis. This would help the elders’ struggles and unemployment.”

– Cape Dorset

“Will we be able to sell eventually?”

– Iqaluit

“Online and credit card sales will limit people’s access to cannabis.”

– Igloolik

“It would be best to have a physical store in each community.”

– Rankin Inlet

Some other participants thought that physical stores would be the best way to ensure accessibility to legal cannabis products:

“There should be a store opened in the community to allow for accessibility. Lack of accessibility to cannabis is like layers of oppression.”

– Cambridge Bay

However, a few participants were critical of selling cannabis in physical stores in their communities:

“I don’t agree that stores should be supplying. I don’t want pot to be around the store.”

– Cape Dorset

Taxation and Revenue

Many participants shared opinions on how revenue from cannabis should be spent in the territory. In particular, many participants were strongly and consistently in favor of using revenues from retail cannabis sales to support mental health, addictions treatment and prevention, and other programming.

“Lots of money going to the federal government. It would be a good idea to distribute some of that revenue to the municipalities. In next two years when you are negotiating, maybe we can get money from tax to go to municipalities. [We have] no addictions programs, anything like that. We have been saying no to alcohol without an addictions centre. Arviat really needs one.”

– Arviat

“We recommend that a specific percentage of revenue go towards research, education, and programming. But regardless of where the money comes from, we need these things once cannabis is legalized.”

– Iqaluit

“Revenue should be going towards support, counselling services. This is just what I have in mind.”

– Rankin Inlet

“If you can take some of the money [from cannabis sales] and use it for alcohol prevention, withdrawal, and treatment then I would support you. Thank you.”

– Iqaluit

“Do we have money put aside for all of that for the after effects of it? What about all the costs of helping people, treatment, assistance, are they going to have a place to go for treatment centre in Nunavut?”

– Arviat

Elder Abuse

Most elders and many other participants shared personal stories of children and grandchildren abusing their elders for money to purchase cannabis, alcohol, and other drugs. Many noted that high unemployment rates make elder abuse more frequent:

“I am worried about the impact on social and family life. Each community is different. There are lots of opportunities to make money in Iqaluit, but in Arviat we don’t have that. The elders have to support the habits of younger generations.”

– Arviat

“I tried to get help from them [the RCMP] a few times when there was aggressiveness in the home. But there is nothing they can do... There needs to be some resources. We could look at relocating the elders to move them to a place where they can live in peace.”

– Arctic Bay

“I see a lot of oppressed elders. They are oppressed by their addicted adult children and addicted grandchildren. They live in silence because they live in fear.”

– Rankin Inlet

“Legalization means problems for elders. This impacts all elders—not just those in Kugaaruk. Elder abuse is a real problem because their kids and grandkids force them to give money to support their habits.”

– Kugaaruk

Poverty and Hunger

Participants often spoke of poverty, hunger, and unemployment in relation to cannabis use. Partly because cannabis can be an addictive substance, participants noted that it was common for Nunavummiut to prioritize cannabis use over food, and to steal from or abuse family members for money to buy cannabis.

“There are very little jobs here and that’s why kids go hungry—whatever money there is people use to buy cannabis. We need to look at the issue with cannabis, we need to somehow suppress it. I’d rather have prohibition, but it is not feasible, so we have to look at how we can manage it better.”

– Arctic Bay

“Some of the youth even sell drawings and parent’s belongings to get cannabis. There will be more poverty in the community. More people will become addicted. More people who are poor.”

– Arviat

Product Pricing

Cannabis prices in Nunavut are higher than in other provinces. According to Statistics Canada, Nunavummiut pay an average of \$12.61 per gram for cannabis, while southern Canadians pay roughly \$7.25 per gram in 2017.² However, this survey does not account for the source of the cannabis; while Nunavummiut can order cannabis online for prices similar to the price per gram that other Canadians pay, cannabis sold by the illegal market in Nunavut can cost anywhere from \$30 to \$100 per gram depending on the community.

Given that many Nunavummiut do not have access to a credit card or the internet, it is reasonable to assume that a significant number of cannabis consumers in Nunavut are forced to pay the exorbitant prices charged by the illegal market, and that these consumers would not have participated in the Statistics Canada survey.

This is the context in which participants and stakeholders frequently requested that legalized cannabis be sold at a price closer to what other Canadians are paying. By reducing cannabis prices, many hope that families will have to spend less of their total income on cannabis, which would leave more money for necessities like rent and food.

² Statistics Canada, National Gross Domestic Product by Income and by Expenditure Accounts (IEA) survey no. 1901.

“...cigarettes and alcohol... are regulated and they are cheap to buy down south, but as soon as they reach north the price is way up, including cannabis it is going to be like that. In the beginning cigarettes costs 50 cents, and now it is 20 dollars a pack. In the beginning it will be cheap, but then the government will increase the price. I sympathize with young people and their families because the costs of these are so high and children go hungry. The government should provide subsidies and give away more money to families.”

– Arctic Bay

“Some people will sell seal skin because a joint costs 30 dollars. Is there going to be a fixed price? I don’t need to mention poverty reduction, you are all educated and you know what this means.”

– Rankin Inlet

“My first question is—we are talking about legalizing cannabis. With the price being high now, when it becomes legal will the price go down?”

– Arctic Bay

“At least lower the price to lessen the impact on someone’s income or money. It is becoming more and more available. I don’t agree with legalizing but at least bring the price down and make it more affordable.”

– Arctic Bay

“This will benefit a lot of families when the price goes down.”

– Cape Dorset

Possession and Consumption outside Nunavut

A few participants had questions about how individuals could possess and consume cannabis when they are travelling in Canada, especially when on medical travel. Participants wanted to know what the GN and boarding home policies would be when it comes to cannabis possession and consumption while in care.

“How does possession work with travel?”

– Iqaluit

“Can I use cannabis during medical travel or at a boarding home?”

– Rankin Inlet

Advertising and Packaging

Most participants agreed that advertising for cannabis products should not be allowed, similar to how tobacco is currently handled in the territory.

In addition, participants shared their views that packaging for cannabis products must not be enticing to children. Many participants made it clear that there should be educational materials such as pamphlets or brochures included with each purchase to provide information on the risks associated with use and how the product should be safely consumed.

“We recommend plain packaging that includes info on potency and health effects.”

– Iqaluit

“There are labels on cigarette packages with what [is in] the [package] content[s]. Are there going to be content labels on cannabis packages?”

– Kimmirut

“Good to know that when cannabis is legal, people will know what’s in it and what’s not because many people in the community are using it.”

– Igloolik

Language and Terminology

Participants emphasized the importance of language and terminology around cannabis. Beyond the need for interpretation and translation for services and educational materials, communities identified the need for new terms in Inuktitut to describe terms related to cannabis:

“The term cannabis or marijuana in Inuktitut is very negative. This needs to be looked into to see if there is another term.”

– Rankin Inlet

Some participants voiced concerns about the impact that cannabis terminology and language has on perceptions of the substance:

“I think the ‘recreational’ cannabis term is problematic. For example we are at ‘recreational’ hall... it might give it a ‘sexy’ meaning. Recreational sounds socially okay and it could promote it among youth. If going forward, coming up with a term that is distinct from ‘medical’ but different from ‘recreational’ would be helpful. The implications are very much unknown at this point, in terms of terminology and recreational use.” – Rankin Inlet

Need for More In-Person Meetings

A number of participants, whether they were supportive of cannabis legalization or not, were grateful for the opportunity to be consulted on the topic and noted their desire for more opportunities for public meetings:

“Thank you for coming. This is the first time GN resource people have come into our community. This is the first time I have seen something like this.”

– Coral Harbour

“Everything we have heard from the floor tonight and why is your stay here so limited and timed that you have to leave tonight. I would have been happy with 2 nights of representation at least. I do understand that you have to consider there are a whole lot of communities in Nunavut. But this is an issue that should be discussed and presented on further.”

– Coral Harbour

“Thank you for being here...”

– Arctic Bay

“I thank the panel at least for listening to me and for face-to-face meeting.”

– Arctic Bay

Reconciliation

During the consultations, several themes emerged in relation to political decision making. These themes are closely linked to Nunavut Inuit’s lived experience of language and culture loss as a result of the residential schooling system and the political and legal policies used to colonize Indigenous peoples more generally.

Although questions were not specifically asked about the impact of colonialism on legislation, it is important to acknowledge and share these comments, given that they underlie much of the proceeding information shared.

Several participants shared their feelings of powerlessness over cannabis legalization and how this is similar to past colonial practices:

“...50 years ago we were not allowed to speak Inuktitut in residential schools and I am feeling that same feeling of powerlessness...I have 18 grandkids. I am going to keep fighting for them. A lot of us, my generation, feels like we are failing. I am failing the younger generations.”

– Arviat

“In Indigenous culture, the introduction of alcohol and tobacco was colonial. It wasn’t originally there. So are there perspectives that cannabis legalization is imposing colonialism on Inuit? What works in the south doesn’t work in the north.”

– Cape Dorset

“You are only providing us with information that has already been decided on. A proposal always sounds good. But after time there are always changes that we don’t find out about. We were living on the land when we were told we have move to Arctic Bay in houses that would cost us two dollars in rent. We had dog teams—we believed these people, we believed them that we would have very low rent. But the rent kept going up higher. We didn’t know that the price would keep increasing.”

– Arctic Bay

“As a grandfather I can do nothing. As soon as July 1 comes, this will be legal to carry and use it. We cannot do nothing, I cannot do nothing as a grandfather, as a father... There is nothing much we can do because it is going to be a law. What more can we do now.”

– Coral Harbour

“For the last 40 years, we have been telling the government what we think, how we feel, what we expect, and this is no different this evening. I find it so...I know we are all...I know the decision has been made and the decision has been made over our control. We have to now come and analyze the best way we know how to deal with it.”

– Cape Dorset

A few participants highlighted the history of Nunavut Inuit and questioned why and how cannabis could be legalized when there is a lack of in-territory mental health and addictions support, resources, and treatment:

“Nunavut is always considered the most unique—historically never treated the same as the rest of Canada. We have a history of TB treatment, history of residential schools. Yet we are being treated just like the rest of Canadians when we don’t have as many resources as the rest of the country.”

– Rankin Inlet

“Who can we lobby to get a treatment centre right away with the federal government? It was so easy for them to relocate people from northern Quebec to Grise Fiord. This was so easy for them to do, so why can’t we do the same to the federal government to get them to open treatment centres in Nunavut?”

– Arctic Bay

Other participants questioned why representatives from the federal government were not present to consult with them on cannabis legalization:

“Why isn’t Hunter Tootoo our MP [Member of Parliament] here, and why isn’t someone from the Feds here? If it is legalized what good will come of us? There’s still going to be broken marriages and schizophrenia... First nations are treated like royalty. We were here just like them... Why are we not looked at like other indigenous people?”

– Coral Harbour

“Why didn’t the federal government make a vote for this before they make a decision?”

– Cambridge Bay

“If only Justin [Trudeau] can hear our cries. Justin [Trudeau] should come here and deal with Coral Harbour himself and should not have sent someone else.”

– Coral Harbour

One participant remarked on the lack of Inuit representation on the consultation panel during the public meeting.

“When I see the panel is all non-Inuit I wonder where is the representation of Inuit and IQ principles.”

– Arviat

One participant spoke from their experience working in corrections and reflected on the high numbers of incarcerated Indigenous People:

“You said there would be harsher penalties for providing to youth. I work in corrections—corrections is to correct the wrong. We are already dealing with indigenous peoples who are incarcerated—and this is all info online from OAG—indigenous people are already over represented in the corrections system. Culturally appropriate assessments do not exist. Typically indigenous people serve more time and lack resources and programs. I’m

concerned for my people. It is unfair they are already lacking programs from a cultural perspective. Seems from every angle there's an issue."

– Rankin Inlet

One participant brought up the legacy of residential schools on home dynamics and cited the importance of involving elders in delivering programming:

"The parenting lifestyle has been taken away from us due to residential schools. We are working to reclaim our identity and our abilities, the roles of who we are, how do we learn to be a good person, and following our values and traditions. Working with our elders has helped us. We want to have more parenting programs to teach about those. I work with her to see what we can do and sometimes she will come to our afterschool program and talk to them about how to be a good person. It would be great to see more people have the availability for the parenting programs to learn about cannabis, alcohol, tobacco, and integrating a healthy lifestyle in our homes."

– Cambridge Bay

"It would be great to see more people have the availability for the parenting programs to learn about cannabis, alcohol, tobacco, and integrating a healthy lifestyle in our homes."

– Cambridge Bay

Conclusion

After consulting with Nunavummiut across the territory, it is clear that cannabis legalization is an important and personal issue for many. Most participants support legalization as a way to try to address the issues they know already exist in Nunavut. It is important to recognize that the individuals that shared their feedback often spoke from their own lived experience.

In all cases, it is clear that Nunavummiut are most interested in the well-being of family, friends and communities. Going forward, as the federal government moves to legalize cannabis across the country, the GN will carefully consider what we heard on the range of complex issues related to cannabis. Our intent is to design, implement and deliver a territorial cannabis system that helps move consistently towards overall harm reduction in Nunavut, for Nunavummiut.

