

Government of Canada Introduces Legislation to Legalize Cannabis

On April 13, the Government of Canada introduced **Bill C-45** (the *Cannabis Act*). Bill C-45 proposes developing a legal framework around the production, distribution, and retail sale of cannabis for recreational use. The Bill is the formalization of recommendations from the **report** of the **Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation**.

The Government of Canada news release on the *Cannabis Act* is available [here](#).

The Government of Canada intends to activate the framework and legalize cannabis no later than July 2018. Consultations with other levels of government and interested stakeholders is anticipated to occur over the next several months.

For municipalities, the ambitious timeline to legalization is concerning, as many questions remain unanswered, including the role of municipal police services in enforcing cannabis-impaired driving, and the role of municipalities as employers in monitoring on-the-job impairment. Municipalities are also expected to have a role in enforcing the siting of cannabis retail establishments. Developing bylaws and increasing enforcement resources and capacity will be challenging in this short time.

For AAMDC members, a major additional issue to consider is the siting, zoning, and assessment of commercial cannabis production facilities. The Task Force report frames the production of cannabis as a federal issue, but most production facilities will likely be in rural areas and result in both opportunities and challenges for rural municipalities. The AAMDC has discussed issues related to the zoning, assessment, and taxation of cannabis facilities with Alberta Municipal Affairs, and possible municipal enforcement, health, and safety issues associated with production facilities with Alberta Justice and Solicitor General.

The AAMDC is also engaged with the Government of Canada on this issue through collaboration with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

The AAMDC will share further developments on this issue as they become available.

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