



BACKGROUND

CANNABIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE PRINCE GEORGE

AUGUST 24, 2022

With the Retail Cannabis Council of BC and Prince George Community Futures (CFDC), the BC Craft Farmers Co-op (BCCFC) invited approximately 40 northern BC craft farmers, processors, cannabis retailers, community, business and Indigenous leaders to meet, network and answer two questions:

- Does Northern BC have a unique opportunity to be a provincial and national leader in craft cannabis production and processing?
- If yes, what is the scale of this opportunity and what are the barriers to realizing this potential?

Participants also discussed the provincial government's current labour dispute and the impact it was having on the sector, including the just-launched direct cannabis sales program.

In general, participants agreed the cannabis industry can create a significant number of sustainable jobs in the region if governments can ease the sector's regulatory burden and facilitate access to capital. Here is a summary of opportunities, barriers and solutions discussed:

Opportunities

Participants agreed northern BC has several advantages compared to other regions of Canada:

- Already home to some of the country's most experienced craft cannabis farmers;
- Skilled labour force available;
- Market shifting to meet consumer demand for fresh, local cannabis products;
- Low cost of land compared to other parts of BC;
- Prince George is a potential cannabis distribution hub for other BC, Territories and Alberta markets with a well-functioning airport;
- Established tourism infrastructure to accommodate destination cannabis tourism demand (recreation, medical);
- BC roll out of direct sales, farm gate and consumption policies can help regional farmers attract tourism opportunities;
- Promote wellness and healing associated with cannabis consumption;
- Cannabis Act review can lead to improvements for craft farmers and processors;
- Indigenous governments are fully engaged and providing leadership;

BCCFC was founded in 2020 to provide BC's small cannabis producers and processors with a safe, accessible, and sustainable alternative to the illicit market while maintaining BC's top position as an international cannabis leader and innovator. BCCFC is led by over 200 highly skilled Members and Supporters who are working to accelerate market access for BC's legendary micro-cultivators, processors, and independent retailers.



- Community business organizations interested in collaboration;
- Establishment of “cannabis agri-parks” where many small producers can farm together and achieve economies of scale;
- University infrastructure can support research and laboratory collaborations; and
- Development of BC craft certification tool for consumer awareness and education.

Barriers

- Unnecessary red tape at federal, provincial and municipal levels of government is expensive, discouraging, time-consuming, inconsistent and uncoordinated;
- Cannabis Act regulatory roadblocks for micro-producers have included a 2,100 sq. ft. production limit, non-specific security clearance criteria, high entry costs and marketing restrictions;
- Minimal incentives for municipal governments to embrace sector opportunities;
- Financial institutions are hesitant to offer even basic banking services and if they do, high fees are attached;
- Access to government grants and other capital is virtually non-existent compared to other agriculture sectors;
- Unfair and ineffective provincial government monopoly competing against private sector;
- Government restrictions, high taxes and high costs ensure the illicit market remains active;
- Lack of organization and difficulties gathering stakeholders;
- Limited outdoor growing season with colder temperatures;
- BC government won’t list all products from craft farmers;
- No access to government grants or transition support; and
- Public indifference.

Solutions

- Develop an action plan that responds to participant feedback and focused on:
 - Ongoing community engagement and collaboration
 - Access to capital
 - Indigenous partnership and Reconciliation
 - Development of a coordinated Northern BC cannabis economic development and tourism strategy
 - Public education and awareness

Over the coming weeks, BCCFC will meet with CFDC officials and other local organizations that participated in the roundtable to develop an action plan that responds to participant feedback.

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