

Cannabis Conference for Community Governments

Mr. Speaker, from January 16 to 17, 2019, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs brought community government leaders together to discuss cannabis. This was our first opportunity for such a gathering since cannabis became legal in Canada on October 17, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, the legalization of cannabis presents challenges for Northern society. The purpose of this conference was to look for local solutions for community governments as they deal with this new reality. Our focus was on presenting as much information as possible for local leaders, with the right experts available to answer as many questions as possible.

The first part of the conference addressed the legislative framework for the management of legal cannabis. I wish to express my thanks to the following departments or agencies who made their officials available: the Department of Finance, who presented on their legislation and the new retail process; the Department of Health and Social Services, who presented on cannabis smoking control and health promotion efforts; the Department of Infrastructure and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who presented on changes to the *Motor Vehicles Act* and associated efforts to manage impaired driving; the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission and the law firm of McLennan Ross who led an excellent session on labour relations and human resources; and Municipal and Community Affairs' staff, who presented on community-based planning, zoning and bylaw-making authority.

The conference included a keynote speaker from Manitoba who brought a national perspective, as well as a speaker from Colorado with an international view. In addition to the presentations, our conference organizers also provided a wide range of resources for delegates to take away and continue their learning.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are lessons we can take away from this conference. First, despite the State of Colorado legalizing cannabis many years ago, they are still dealing with

the effects of this change today, and there will be more for us to learn going forward. Second, we know that despite providing considerable information and resources to community leaders, there is a thirst for even more information and a need to continue this discussion locally in our communities. Finally, we heard from communities that while cannabis is now legal, there are still many impacts of drugs and alcohol that are having a continued effect on our communities and our residents, especially our youth.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that our government is continuing an aggressive public awareness campaign in the coming year. I especially commend the efforts of the Department of Health and Social Services, with community-based workshops, as well as social marketing efforts using cutting-edge techniques such as augmented reality. All of this is aimed at supporting our youth as they deal with this change, and I am grateful for these efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I believe community leaders were pleased with the information they received at the conference. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will assist communities on issues related to community planning and local controls and from a human resources perspective as they establish proper policies for their workplaces. We have only had legal cannabis for a little over five months. We cannot expect to have all the answers today, but Municipal and Community Affairs will continue to support our communities and our residents as we all adapt to the reality of legal cannabis in the coming months and years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.