



Local Governments' Role in Licensing Non-Medical Cannabis Retail Stores

If you have any questions about this document, please contact the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch toll-free at 1-866 209-2111, or email cannabisregs@gov.bc.ca. NOTE: This document will be updated from time to time as additional information surrounding the regulatory framework for cannabis retail sales becomes available. (Last updated 28 September, 2018)

Non-medical cannabis retail licence

The province will be issuing licences for non-medical cannabis retail stores. A cannabis retail store must be a standalone business. This licence requires input and a positive recommendation from a local government in whose area the proposed store is located.

The province recognizes the importance of ensuring carefully regulated access to non-medical cannabis in all areas of the province, including rural areas.

As a first step, the province will open opportunities to apply for regular retail licences. Once the regional distribution of retail non-medical cannabis stores is known, the province will consider issuing licences to service rural or remote areas that are not sufficiently served by existing retail cannabis stores.

The role of local governments in the cannabis retail store licensing process

Applicants for a non-medical cannabis retail store licence must submit a licence application to the LCRB. When an application is received, the LCRB will notify the local government of the area where the proposed store will be located.

Upon receipt of notice, local governments can:

- choose not to make any recommendation in respect of the application for a cannabis retail store licence (Note: this would end a licence application in progress because the LCRB cannot issue a licence unless the local government gives the LCRB a positive recommendation that the licence be issue)
- choose to make comments and recommendations in respect of an application for a cannabis retail store licence. Note that:
 - if the local government chooses to make a comments and recommendation on the licensee's application to the LCRB, it must gather the views of residents
 - if it makes a recommendation to deny the application then the LCRB may not issue the licence
 - if it makes a recommendation in favour of the application, then the LCRB has discretion whether or not to issue the licence, but must consider the local government's recommendation.

Local Governments (municipalities, regional districts or Islands Trust local trust committees) have some or all of the following regulatory powers in respect of cannabis retail store licences:

- Impose restrictions in its zoning bylaws regarding the location of cannabis retail stores
- Regulation of business (municipalities only): by terms and conditions in its business licensing bylaw, a municipality may limit the hours that cannabis retail stores can operate or impose other conditions such specifications regarding signage
- Charge the applicant fees if choosing to assess an application.

The above process applies to all relocations of existing cannabis retail stores.

Gathering residents' views

If the local government decides to consider the notice of application and to provide comments and recommendations as to the location of the proposed retail store, it must gather the views of residents of the area if the location of the proposed store may affect nearby residents. It may gather resident's views by using one or more of the following methods:

- Receiving written comment in response to a public notice of the application
- Conducting a public hearing in respect of the application
- Holding a referendum, or
- Using another method the local government considers appropriate.

It is up to the local government to determine the area, relative to the licensee's application, where resident's views must be gathered.

Please note: Gathering the views of residents of the area/providing a recommendation to the LCRB must be unique to each provincial licence application. In other words, past recommendations cannot be used in a new licensing process. Each individual application must be considered separately by the local government.

What must the local government's recommendation include?

The recommendations and comments the local government provides to the LCRB must:

- be in writing (this may or may not be in the form of a resolution)
- show that the local government has considered the location of the proposed store
- include the views of the local government on the general impact on the community if the application is approved
- include the views of residents if the local government has gathered residents' views, and a description of how they were gathered
- include the local government's recommendation as to whether the application should be approved or rejected and provide the reasons upon which the recommendation is based.

The local government should also provide any supporting documents referenced in their comments.

What if the local government does not want to provide a recommendation?

If a local government does not want to accept the notice of application and provide a recommendation for the proposed retail location, they should notify the LCRB. A licence for a cannabis retail store will not be issued without a positive recommendation from a local government. If a response is not received, LCRB will not consider the application any further.

What if the recommendation does not meet the regulatory requirements?

If the recommendation does not meet the regulatory requirements, the LCRB will ask the local government to provide new or amended comments that address outstanding issues.

How long does the local government have to provide comments?

Unlike in the process for liquor licensing, local governments are not required to provide a recommendation on a cannabis retail store application within a specific time period. Please note that delays in the application process can have a significant impact on the applicant. If the applicant is the reason for the delay, please notify the LCRB. If the applicant is not trying to move an application forward, the application can be cancelled.

Can the local government recommend approval subject to certain conditions?

In some circumstances, the local government can recommend that the LCRB approve the application as long as certain restrictions (e.g. hours of operation) are placed on the licence. In these situations, the recommendation should clearly explain the rationale for placing restrictions.

If the local government intends to request that the LCRB impose terms and conditions on a licence, prior to sending such a recommendation the local government should consult with the LCRB so that the LCRB can determine whether it has the authority to impose the requested terms and conditions before finalizing their conditional recommendation.

The local government may also have the ability to impose other operating rules on the proposed store through the terms and conditions of the applicant's business licence, zoning or bylaw. The local government is responsible for enforcing these rules.

Floor Plans

Applicants must submit a floor plan with their licence application for approval so the LCRB can identify store features such as sales, storage and delivery areas. Unlike for some kinds of liquor licence applications, local governments are not required to provide occupant load stamps or approve the applicant's floor plans as part of the provincial licensing process for cannabis retail stores.

A municipal council or regional district board can delegate authority to their staff to provide comments and a recommendation to the LCRB

A municipal council or regional district board may delegate its powers and duties to provide comments and a recommendation to the LCRB regarding a cannabis retail store licence application. If a council or board has delegated this authority, a cannabis retail store applicant may ask for comments and recommendations made by delegated staff to be reconsidered by the local government.

Council as defined in the Vancouver Charter:

A Council, as defined in the *Vancouver Charter*, choosing to delegate to its staff must establish procedures for a reconsideration of comments and recommendations made by delegated staff, including how a cannabis retail store applicant may apply for reconsideration. In undertaking a reconsideration, the Council will have the same authority as it delegated to staff.

Right of reconsideration:

Delegated local government staff must advise the cannabis retail store licence applicant that the applicant has the right of reconsideration of the staff’s recommendation by the council or board.

How local governments inform the LCRB of delegation:

A local government that has delegated authority to staff should send a copy of the delegation to the LCRB at Cannabis.Licensing@gov.bc.ca.

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