



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

November 24, 2021

Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Room 128, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Farnworth:

Re: Illegal Retail Cannabis Sales

Several MLAs in the province, particularly in the southern interior, are expressing ongoing and increased concern, over the number of illegal retail cannabis shops that continue to operate. The Shuswap riding alone has over two dozen such shops operating on First Nations lands. If you recall, during estimates a few months ago, you advised that there were an estimated 50 illegal cannabis operations across the province. I find it alarming that over half of these are in the Shuswap.

Sufficient time has passed since legislation controlling cannabis retail sales came into force and the creation of the BC Community Safety Unit. Illegal operators should now be educated and informed.

The continued operation of these illegal retail outlets, particularly the concentration of illegal operations in the Shuswap, jeopardize the financial viability of Cannabis retail operators who have made significant investments to comply with provincial legislation. Of most concern, however, is the health risks associated to illegal cannabis, again an issue identified by yourself during estimates. This situation is now exacerbated by supply chain difficulties with legal suppliers getting product to legal retailers increasing opportunities for illegal cannabis suppliers.

1. Can you provide me with an update on the Community Safety Unit? Are they fully staffed, and do they have enough resources to address the concentration of illegal retail outlets on First Nations reserves in the Shuswap and other regions of the province?
2. How many illegal cannabis retailers in this region have been visited by the Community Safety Officers to educate them on possessing cannabis not originating from federally licensed producers, the retail licensing requirements, and the consequences of non-compliance?

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3. What specific information, documents or enforcement notices are provided to the illegal cannabis operations to support any initial oral instructions?
4. What efforts are undertaken by CSU investigators to determine the legal name and residential address of the illegal shop owner, and to confirm or otherwise verify the civic address of the location where the illegal activity is being conducted?
5. How many enforcement actions have been initiated in each of the various regions of the province since the legislation has come into force, and the outcomes of those enforcement actions.
6. Have you had any correspondence or communications with the Finance Minister to discuss the projected revenue losses to the province of BC because of the illegal cannabis operations?

As always, I appreciate the assistance provided by you and your ministry staff.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Morris, MLA, Prince George/Mackenzie
Official Opposition Critic for Public Safety and Solicitor General