

Quebec Introduces the Quebec *Cannabis Regulation Act*

November 17, 2017

On November 16, 2017, the Government of Quebec released its proposed cannabis legislation, Bill 157, an act to constitute the Société Québécoise du Cannabis (the SQC), to enact the *Cannabis Regulation Act* and to amend various highway safety-related provisions (the Act). The Act elaborates on the Quebec Government's plan to establish the SQC, a subsidiary of the Société des alcools du Québec, as the sole distributor of cannabis in the province. If passed, the Act will lay the foundations for a stricter cannabis regime as compared with other provinces.

The Act proposes to establish the SQC as the sole distributor of cannabis throughout the province, with 15 stores set to open province-wide as of July 1, 2018, and up to a total of 150 stores opening over the course of the following two years. The SQC will also provide the option to order cannabis online, which would be delivered throughout the province by Canada Post.

The legal age to purchase cannabis will be 18 in Quebec, which is in line with the Quebec Government's legal age for alcohol consumption, and minors will not be permitted in SQC stores. Individuals will be permitted to possess up to 30 grams of cannabis at a time, with a total of 150 grams permitted to be in the home at a time. The Provincial Government has taken a significantly more restrictive step away from Federal Legislation with respect to home-grown cannabis - growing cannabis within the home for personal use will not be permitted in Quebec.

Cannabis users will be subject to the current tobacco consumption laws in Quebec, meaning that users must maintain a specific distance from public buildings and bars when smoking and will be prohibited from consuming cannabis in bus shelters, parks and skating rinks. Consumption will also be banned on all CEGEP and university campuses.

Quebec has also taken a strong stance on enforcing restrictions on impaired driving, citing a zero tolerance policy for driving under the influence of cannabis. The Quebec Government plans to implement road-side saliva tests and allow police officers to immediately suspend an individual's license if trace amounts of cannabis, or other illicit drugs, are found for a period of 90 days. The Quebec Government is still in talks with the Federal Government to obtain final approval for this testing regime.

We Can Help

For more information on how Cassels can assist your business, please contact Michael Weizel or another member of our firm's cross-disciplinary Cannabis Group.

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