

News Release

Ontario Announces Cannabis Retail Model

Combination of online and regulated private retail will prioritize child safety and work to eliminate the illegal market

August 13, 2018 4:10 P.M.

[Ministry of Finance](#)

TORONTO — Following the federal legalization of cannabis on October 17, Ontario will immediately introduce an online retail channel for cannabis, to be followed by a private retail model by April 1, 2019.

Minister of Finance Vic Fedeli and Attorney General Caroline Mulroney today shared details about how the province will manage cannabis retail following the federal government's decision to legalize the drug effective October 17, 2018.

"We will be ready to put in place a safe, legal system for cannabis retail that will protect consumers," said Mulroney. "We will also be ready to undermine the illegal market and protect Ontario's roads. Most importantly of all, we will be ready to protect our kids."

"Throughout this process we have held fast to some non-negotiable principles: Public safety is paramount," said Fedeli. "We will make sure our youth are safe; our roads are safe and that we work with our municipalities to ensure our neighbourhoods are safe."

Starting on October 17, consumers 19 and older will be able to purchase cannabis via an online retail platform provided by the Ontario Cannabis Store. The OCS online channel will include a verification system that will ensure safe at home delivery for cannabis products, thereby meeting the federally imposed obligation that provinces be ready for retail sales for the start of legalization.

The Ministers further announced that the province would immediately begin consultations in advance of opening up a tightly regulated private retail model for cannabis that will launch by April 1, 2019. As part of this process the government will begin consultations with municipalities, Indigenous communities, law enforcement, public health advocates, businesses and consumer groups and representatives of the other provinces with private retail to ensure that Ontario's private retail model remains safe while helping to eliminate the illegal market.

"The Government of Ontario will not be in the business of running physical cannabis stores," said Fedeli. "Instead, we will work with private sector businesses to build a safe, reliable retail system that will divert sales away from the illegal market."

Private retailers will have to follow a series of provincial rules, such as prohibiting the sale of cannabis to anyone under the age of 19. Ontario will begin to consult on a number of rules all retailers will be mandated to follow including set hours of operation and staff training. Federal law lays out numerous other retail requirements, including restricted advertising, that products are not visible to children, and that all sales must be made over the counter.

The Ministers also announced a zero-tolerance policy, including severely escalating fines, for any retailer or dispensary who continues to operate in the illicit markets.

On October 17, 2018, Ontario will enact new measures. New road safety laws include serious penalties that will increase consequences and costs for those who drive under the influence of cannabis and other drugs. Ontario will have zero-tolerance for impaired young, novice or commercial drivers.

In order to provide consumers with confidence, the Ontario government is proposing to introduce an Official Ontario Cannabis Retailer Seal that will help consumers identify legitimate retailers where federally quality assured products can be found.

"Despite the upcoming legalization of cannabis use for responsible adults, it still poses risks to health and safety. We will continue to work with our health care professionals to discourage all forms of recreational drug use. And under no circumstances will we tolerate anybody sharing, selling or otherwise providing cannabis to anybody under the age of 19," said Mulroney.

The government will provide municipalities with a one-time window under which they can choose to opt-out of permitting physical cannabis retail stores within their boundaries. The provincial government will provide \$40 million to municipalities over two years to help local governments keep their communities safe.

"In order to protect our communities — we have to work closely with our municipalities. In fact, they are our essential partners," concluded Fedeli. "We are committed to creating a safe retail model that eliminates the illegal cannabis market in Ontario. We are taking a balanced and responsible approach to building a system that works."

Quick Facts

- The Official Ontario Cannabis Retailer Seal would be used to identify licensed retailers and providers so that consumers know they are purchasing federally quality controlled products from a legitimate retailer.

- The government will consult to determine specific private retailing rules including the types of eligible businesses that will be able to sell cannabis, the roles of municipalities and First Nations, how to protect youth and children, and how to protect against involvement by organized crime.
- Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta are also moving ahead with a private model for retail storefronts to help eliminate the illegal market. Ontario will work with our partners to build on what they learn as we consult on our private model.
- It is illegal to drive drug-impaired and it's just as dangerous as driving drunk. Police officers will be authorized to use oral fluid screening devices at roadside to enforce the law.
- Consumers will only be allowed to use recreational cannabis in a private residence, including the outdoor space of a home. Recreational cannabis use will not be allowed in any public spaces, workplaces or motorized vehicles.

Background Information

- [Cannabis Rules to Keep Ontarians Safe and Protected](#)

Additional Resources

- [Ontario's cannabis rules](#)