

Dear SCRD Board and Staff,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Sunshine Coast Farmers Institute we are writing to you to call for a ban on industrial cannabis production on farmland and are asking the local government to preserve farmland primarily for soil-based food production. We urge local governments to use their power to restrict large cannabis facilities to industrial land and to prevent industrial cannabis production on our precious non-renewable resource, our farmland.

Currently, in Area E, on 437 Hough Road, there is a cannabis facility that has had two house fires in the past 3 years, significant drug sales and criminal activity, and emits a strong and pervasive odour of cannabis that can be detected from over 1050 feet away. The federal regulations on filtration and ventilation state; 85 (1) Any building or part of a building where cannabis or anything that will be used as an ingredient is produced, packaged, labelled, stored or tested must be equipped with a system that (a) filters air to prevent the escape of odours associated with cannabis plant material to the outdoors; <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2018-144/FullText.html>. Despite several complaints there has been no change in how this cannabis facility operates.

The current SCRD bylaw setbacks of 1011.7 (2) no building used as a cannabis production facility under Section 1011.5 shall be located within 60 metres of a parcel line and yet this property has had a cannabis facility close to the road, within these setbacks and on a elementary school route for years. The current setbacks need to be increased as they are not effective enough to mitigate noxious odours.

We are concerned that our local government and bylaw officers do not have the capacity to effectively monitor and enforce cannabis operations and that this lack of oversight will lead to wide scale abuse of our farmland.

Every year, more of the produce consumed by British Columbians is coming from sources outside of the country. According to an [article](#) by The Tyee, only about 45 per cent of the vegetables eaten by British Columbians are grown by B.C. farmers. And locally, the [2014 Ag Plan](#) cited that, **at most, we grow 3%** of the food we consume on the coast. Today, one in 50 citizens are involved in agriculture, that number used to be 1 in 3. [Covid has laid bare the danger of a consolidated and concentrated food system.](#) This is an urgent issue for many reasons, including, as cited by Kent Mullinex, “uncertainty of supply as climate change-driven crop production areas collapse, volatility in the world economy, increasing global population, loss of arable land globally, food security, and safety.”

A bag of locally raised greens sells for \$16 per lb and takes 8 weeks from seed to harvest. Local pastured pork sells for up to \$10 per lb and takes 7 months to raise, plus 4 months in utero. Cannabis is sold for \$1500-\$1800 per lb and takes 4.5 months to grow from clones. [“An acre of soybeans will make farmers \\$500, while an acre of hemp could make them as much as \\$30k”.](#) Although significant capital is needed

to start a cannabis facility, the same can be said for all types of farms, especially water infrastructure. Cannabis production is significantly more lucrative than traditional farming operations, even if it's just low THC content hemp being grown. If a cannabis producer has enough capital to start a cannabis operation, they can afford to purchase industrial land. Delta Mayor George Harvie noted that cannabis production moved to farmland as a way to cut costs. ["It costs a lot more to establish a recreational marijuana operation in an industrial area than it does in the ALR land, I find it shameful that they're allowed to do that."](#)

Therefore, we ask that the following regulations be put in place to help protect our diminishing agricultural land reserve.

**We request that the SCRD, Town of Gibsons and District of Sechelt:**

1. cap the number of cannabis facilities that are eligible to operate on ALR land in each district on the Sunshine Coast, with the exception of outdoor field grown cannabis.
2. restrict industrial cannabis production to industrial or commercial land.
3. restrict large 'soil-based' cannabis facilities to parcels of 8 hectares or more with adequate setbacks over 100 m to mitigate noxious odours, light pollution and toxic leachate to surrounding residences and farms.
4. cap the maximum square footage of soil-based cannabis facilities to 10% of the lot size.
5. enact severe penalties for cannabis companies that fail to install proper air filters, who allow noxious odours, leachate, prohibited dumping and removal of soil, and who pollute the groundwater, thereby affecting neighbouring farmland.
6. charge a development cost to every new cannabis facility in the ALR and this development cost be assigned to fund soil-based food production in the ALR.
7. ensure indoor cannabis production facilities are subject to the same water restrictions as outdoor food production. At no point should indoor cannabis production facilities be given unrestricted access to municipal water while food farmers are restricted and/or cut off from water use.

We ask that our local governments take steps immediately to prohibit large scale industrial cannabis operations in the ALR, with the exception of field grown cannabis. Local governments retain the ability to prohibit and/or regulate if cannabis production is not: outside, in a structure with a soil base, or in a structure constructed (but not altered to increase its size) or authorized for construction before July 2018.

It is unfortunate that the Province, without adequate consultation, moved quickly to deem cannabis production as permitted farm use in May, 2019. Now, a year and a half later, we need to act now and revise our bylaws to prevent more farmland from being destroyed. Some of us attended the May 22, 2019 meeting in Sechelt, where the ALC and Ministry of Agriculture discussed these changes. The statements from the ALC officials made it clear that local governments have the "choice to regulate", with "a lot of discretion" and are able to "create your own ALR within a broad definition of the ALCA."

We need to protect the ALR from being disproportionately bought up and taken over for cannabis production because

- a) ALR land is cheaper than industrial land,
- b) cannabis producers are flocking to the Sunshine Coast for the relatively cheaper land and improved lifestyle, and
- c) cannabis production earns far greater income than any food crop.

"The **ALR** is a provincial land-use zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. It is the biophysical resource base that supports farm and ranch activities in the province. Farming/ranching of **ALR** land is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are regulated." - ALC

In 2019, after Cannabis was deemed farm use, Delta lost five million square feet of food producing greenhouse space to cannabis growing. Since May 2019, cannabis growers have taken advantage of more lenient regulations around cannabis production on ALR land.

Pastured Pork is sold for \$8-\$10 per lb and takes 7 months to raise, plus 4 months in utero. Cannabis is sold for \$1500-\$1800 per lb and takes 4.5 months to grow from clones. ["An acre of soybeans will make farmers \\$500, while an acre of hemp could make them as much as \\$30k"](#). Although significant capital is needed to start a cannabis facility, cannabis production is much more lucrative than traditional farming operations, even if it's just low THC content hemp being grown. If a cannabis producer has enough significant capital to start a cannabis operation, they can afford to purchase industrial land. Delta Mayor George Harvie noted that cannabis production moved to farmland as a way to cut costs. ["It costs a lot more to establish a recreational marijuana operation in an industrial area than it does in the ALR land. I find it shameful that they're allowed to do that."](#)

KPU's Director of the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, Kent Mullinix, does not believe the designation of cannabis production as farm use will benefit farmers in any way. "I think it will benefit very few 'farmers'—I am reticent to call them farmers—but mostly benefit big money [and] the already unreasonably wealthy, and further foment the upward pricing pressure on B.C. farmlands." And this is what we are seeing here on the coast, the wealthy and well connected are buying up farmland for cannabis facilities and making the acquisition of farmland an elite sport, out of reach for your average citizen. Half of B.C.'s food supply is imported from outside the province, raising concerns about provincial food security, self-reliance for food production and climate change, according to a [2011 report](#) from the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions. "Does it make sense to use a precious, non-renewable resource that all of humanity is dependent on so that a few companies can make billions of dollars? No, it does not," said Mullinix.

As of September 2019, [26% of BC's ALR land](#) was being used for cannabis production. Only 5% of BC is ALR land, and half of the ALR is crown land. Only 1.1% of the ALR is suitable for crop production. On the South Coast only 3% of our land is

held in the ALR. The Sunshine Coast's total farmland area has steadily decreased from 867 ha in 2006 to 484 ha in 2016. We cannot afford to lose more of the ALR to non-food production. Currently, only 8% of the ALR on the Sunshine Coast is farmed. If we lose more of our ALR to industrial cannabis production we will become even more dependent on a vulnerable and brittle off coast food supply.

Please ensure that farmers have access, now and in the future, to the essential land and soil required to grow nutrient dense food. Our precarious food security doesn't stand a chance, unless we ensure farmland is preserved primarily for local food production. Please help us build a robust, resilient and reliable local food system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors  
Sunshine Coast Farmers Institute  
[www.sscfi.ca](http://www.sscfi.ca)

For your reference:

SCRD Bylaws

1011.5 with a parcel size equal to or exceeding 8 hectares , the additional permitted use is a cannabis production facility

1011.7 (1) unless otherwise provided for under Section 1011.4, all uses listed in Sections 1011.3 and 1011.4 shall not be sited within 15 meters of any parcel line;

Setback

(2) no building used as a cannabis production facility under Section 1011.5 shall be located within 60 metres of a parcel line

## **Federal Regulations**

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2018-144/FullText.html>

System — filtration and ventilation

85 (1) Any building or part of a building where cannabis or anything that will be used as an ingredient is produced,

packaged, labelled, stored or tested must be equipped with a system that

(a) filters air to prevent the escape of odours associated with cannabis plant material to the outdoors ;

- (b) provides natural or mechanical ventilation with sufficient air exchange to provide clean air and to remove unclean air in order to prevent the contamination of the cannabis or thing that will be used as an ingredient;
- (c) is accessible and, if necessary for its cleaning, maintenance or inspection, is capable of being disassembled;
- (d) is capable of withstanding repeated cleaning; and
- (e) functions in accordance with its intended use.

## Provincial/ALR Regulations

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/support-business-community/sector/cannabis/how>  
[https://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/30\\_2019#section8](https://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/30_2019#section8)

### Relevant Sections:

#### Cannabis

8 (1) The use of agricultural land for producing cannabis lawfully may not be prohibited as described in section 4 if the

cannabis is produced

(a) outdoors in a field, or

(b) inside a structure that, subject to subsection (2), has a base consisting entirely of soil .

(2) The use of agricultural land for producing cannabis lawfully may not be prohibited as described in section 4 if the

cannabis is produced inside a structure that meets both of the following conditions:

(a) the structure was, before July 13, 2018,

(i) constructed for the purpose of growing crops inside it, including but not limited to producing cannabis lawfully, or

(ii) under construction for the purpose referred to in subparagraph (i), if that construction

(A) was being conducted in accordance with all applicable authorizations and enactments, and

(B) continues without interruption from the date it began until the date the structure is completed, other than

work stoppages considered reasonable in the building industry;

(b) The structure has not

### UBCM Letter on Cannabis Production on the ALR

The UBCM Executive discussed the cannabis production issue at their May 2019 meeting and conveyed a [letter \[PDF - 196 KB\]](#) to the Province outlining concerns and a number of questions regarding the lack of consultation, delay in informing local governments and implications for local monitoring and enforcement. A [response \[PDF - 41 KB\]](#) was received in July.

Cannabis Production in the ALR

This information has moved [here](#).

**Cannabis Legalization in Your Community: A Primer for Local Governments**

UBCM has developed a broad guide examining local areas of responsibility, and other aspects of the non-medical cannabis regime that will impact local governments. The primer also includes a list of resources and provincial contacts.

[2018-10-17 Cannabis Legalization in Your Community.pdf \[PDF - 199 KB\]](#)