

Nova Scotia defends controversial plan to sell cannabis in liquor stores



Nova Scotia is defending its unique cannabis retail scheme that will sell weed in existing liquor stores, amid criticisms the arrangement poses a public health risk. Attorney General Mark Furey, left, fields a question as Bret Mitchellin, CEO of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, looks on at a news conference dealing with the sale of cannabis, in Halifax on Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018. *Andrew Vaughan / THE CANADIAN PRESS*

[THE CANADIAN PRESS](#) July 26, 2018 1:22 PM EDT Last Updated July 26, 2018 1:23 PM EDT

HALIFAX — Nova Scotia is defending its unique cannabis retail scheme that will sell weed in existing liquor stores amid criticisms the arrangement poses a public health risk.

A Halifax psychology professor issued a news release criticizing the model, which the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation says is unique in the world.

Marijuana is to be sold under the same roof as alcohol, although the two retail areas will be kept separate.

Simon Sherry of Dalhousie University said Wednesday other jurisdictions have kept them separate because “it’s just not a good idea.”

But Justice Minister Mark Furey said Thursday the NSLC has a track record with regulated products, and is following a federal marijuana panel’s advice on protective measures including staff training and no cross-promotion.

Twelve cannabis stores will open inside NSLC locations on Oct. 17.

“We have full confidence in the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation’s ability to retail a regulated product,” said Furey. “Cannabis is co-located but it is very separate from the alcohol elements.”

Furey said the government will re-examine its retail model after a year, but he expects no changes.

“I think the next 12 months is going to be an important period in the evaluation and assessment in the model we’ve advanced,” Furey told reporters Thursday.

In his news release, Sherry pinpointed three problems with co-sales: Some cannabis users are trying to avoid liquor stores because they have a problem with alcohol; they may encourage non-users to try cannabis products; and they may encourage harmful co-consumption.

“There are good reasons why other jurisdictions have decided against co-location. It’s just not a good idea,” he said.

Sherry said Nova Scotia already has the greatest percentage of cannabis users and cannabis use disorders, as well as grams smoked per person.