

The Cannabis Digest



Unexpected Drug Interactions

Much focus has been placed on the effects of THC, CBD and other chemicals present in the cannabis plant. Less emphasis has been put on the potential drug interactions that may occur with cannabis use. Information about potential drug interactions has been one of the reasons the VCBC has recently hired a local pharmacist to screen new members...

[Read More Page 18]

Six Month Injunction

After a stressful few months, on Monday July 20, the VCBC got an injunction from being evicted from 1625 Quadra Street for 6 months from the BC Supreme Court. This comes after the club was raided in April and the province issued a notice of civil forfeiture against the owners of the building the following month...

[Read More Page 16]

Our 30th Anniversary

Despite 8 raids, millions of dollars in fines, pandemics, evictions, too many deaths to want to remember, staff meltdowns and insurrections, board resignations, insurance scares, lawsuits, bylaw officers, Island Health officials, Worksafe inspections, Canada Revenue Agency investigations, and, of course, several snowstorms, the VCBC has remained open every day possible for 30 years...

[Read More Page 18]

Raid - Injunction - National Petition - Mayor's Letter

FEDERAL GREEN PARTY LAUNCHES MEDICAL CANNABIS PETITION

At the request of the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club, the Green Party of Canada has started a petition to ask Health Canada to help form

the B.C. College of Medical Cannabis Dispensers and to conduct research into high dose edibles. Still in the early stages of development, the B.C.

College of Medical Cannabis Dispensers will seek to gain authorization to certify individuals to give advice on the medical use of cannabis and sign patients up to the federal medical cannabis program. The petition will be entered into the House of Commons in Ottawa in November 2026 by federal Green Party leader, Elizabeth May, where she will be accompanied by VCBC founder, Ted Smith.

Cannabis retailers across the country are expected to assist in the collection of signatures. Currently cannabis retailers are unable to provide medical advice without having a pharmacist, nurse practitioner or doctor physically onsite. Millions of people using cannabis for medical purposes currently purchase at legal retail stores where they are unable to get any advice about how to use cannabis as a medicine or any information about potential drug interactions. Once able to hire certified cannabis dispensers, retail stores will be able to dramatically improve patients health outcomes, which will increase sales.

The B.C. College of Medical Cannabis Dispensers is a recent project of the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club as it attempts to transition into the legal system without compromising its primary functions. By giving birth to this institution, the VCBC intends to formalize the responsibilities of a budtender in a compassion club into a medical professional that sits somewhere between a nurse, doctor, herbalist and pharmacist. To get this project off the ground, 14 different stakeholder groups ranging from doctors and researchers, to First Nations and compassion clubs, will work together to generate educational material and standardize how patients learn about how to use cannabis as medicine.

A link to the Strategic Plan of the B.C. College of Medical Cannabis Dispensers can be found on the Cannabis Digest website, along with a link to the petition. Additionally, the petition requests Health Canada begin seriously studying the benefits of high dose edibles for patients in persistent, chronic

pain and/or fighting cancer. Current THC limits on legal edibles are 10 mg, which is very low for patients requiring up to 1,000 mg THC per day to fight cancer and/or avoid opiate drugs. Patients at the VCBC have been safely and effectively using high dose edibles for decades, with many finding relief from their symptoms they cannot get from other drugs.

The petition is available to download on the Green Party of Canada website. Individuals interested in collecting signatures should print a copy of the first page with the full declaration, which can be followed by multiple pages of the second page that has much more room for signatures. Petitions can be printed on both sides.

Please send petitions directly to Elizabeth May's office by November , postage free.

Elizabeth May, M.P.
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Here is the text of the petition.

Petition to the Government of Canada

Whereas: The *Cannabis Act* currently restricts medical cannabis access strictly to mail-order delivery from licensed producers, excluding physical medical dispensaries and compassion clubs;

Whereas, thousands of low-income, chronically ill, and end-of-life patients relied on storefront compassion clubs like the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club (VCBC) for advice and affordable cannabis products before legalization, though the VCBC is one of the last surviving;

Whereas, the legal 10 mg THC cap on edible products renders required medical doses prohibitively expensive and impractical for patients managing severe, high-tolerance medical conditions;

Whereas, millions of Canadians using cannabis for medical purposes purchase from legal recreational stores that cannot provide any medical advice.

We, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada, call upon the Government of Canada to:

- 1) Work with the B.C. College of Medical Cannabis Dispensers to establish a certification program for providing advice on the medical uses of cannabis.
- 2) Support research into high dose, full-spectrum cannabis extracts for patients in the federal medical cannabis program
- 3) Add certified medical cannabis dispensers to the list of professionals authorized to sign patients into the federal medical cannabis program.

VCBC Causes Political Chaos

In this article, Victoria MLA Grace Lore apologizes to the VCBC and Ted Smith responds.

A very strong letter of support from Victoria Mayor Alto is attached at the end.

Reply from Victoria MLA Grace Lore

Hello Ted and the VCBC Team –

I have been following up with constituents who have reached out on your behalf and shared their support for the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club.

Although my office and I have not heard from you directly, I did want to connect directly.

I want yourselves and everyone who has reached out to me to know that I hear your concerns, on the failure of the federal Cannabis Act and Cannabis Regulations to support the work for the VCBC), the

impact their services have had for many of you and your loved ones, and support for changes to existing laws to continue providing their products and services.

As this is federal legislation, the exemption for medical use lies within Health Canada, and the province is unable to grant an exemption.

I have been bringing these concerns to my colleague, Minister Krieger, and her team in the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and will continue to do so, so that they can raise them

with their federal counterparts. I will also share these concerns with our federal Member of Parliament, Will Greaves, and encourage you to share your thoughts with him as well.



And I want to say that I hear how my video on civil forfeiture felt extremely hurtful to some people – and for that I apologize. It was not my intent, and I was not referring to the VCBC, I can recognize how that landed for those impacted. Please know my intent always is to share general information and make politics more accessible to folks.

As a cancer survivor that has struggled with chronic fatigue, nausea and pain – I am so sorry to those who feel disconnected from relief.

I do need to note that as a locally elected representative, I am unable to get involved or comment on any matter that is before the courts due to conflict of interest rules. Therefore, I am not privy to or able to share any additional information related to enforcement action through the Community Safety Unit that occurred in April.

I know this doesn't provide a satisfactory resolution in the short term, but it is essential for courts and independent offices to be able to do their jobs without political pressure.

Again, you have my commitment to continuing to bring concerns raised forward on behalf of our community. I encourage you to reach out to our MP, the federal Minister for Public Safety, and the federal Minister for Justice.

Sincerely,
Grace

Reply from Ted

Hello Grace Lore,

Thank you for reaching out to us. As you know, we asked our members to contact you to express their concerns about what the NDP government is doing to the VCBC after a series of

actions taken by you and your government this spring. However, it does seem you are completely unaware of the letter of support for us sent to you by the mayor of Victoria, Marianne Alto, which was sent on June 17, 2026, as it is not referred to and you are clearly missing many points laid out in that letter.



It seems you have a staff shortage, as the last four Thursday afternoons when we arrived there was a sign on the door stating that due to staff shortages the office had been closed or you were closed because it was the day after Canada Day. Hopefully the next time we arrive you do not

have a staff shortage again so we can meet with some of them.

Aside from that, we have not recently made a serious attempt to meet with you because the last time we tried we were told by your staff that you could not meet us because we were being raided and fined by the B.C. Solicitor General. It has been very frustrating to us that you have not agreed to meet with us, nor have you invited us to meet in this letter. Instead, you suggest we go meet other political representatives, as you do not appear to have much time for us or feel that there is somehow a conflict of interest if you simply meet us.

Clearly your staff are providing you with limited information on this matter. Rather than assuming

you know what the problems are and what we are requesting, it would have been far better to have at least tried to make a simple phone call. Sadly, we feel like we are just getting the “Talk to the hand” vibe from you.

While it is good that you have heard some concerns about what is happening to the VCBC, there are many aspects of this situation which you do not seem to understand, including actions taken by your provincial NDP government. Pretending to know our concerns based on reading a few letters from constituents diminishes or ignores many problems created by the NDP government since the very beginning of the legal transition. If you do not take the time to learn about what is unfolding and hear directly from our organization, then it is impossible for you to truly comprehend this matter.

Though the federal government legalized cannabis, the province has also introduced legislation controlling the cannabis industry and wields a great



deal of power in the enforcement of those regulations. You are either grossly misinformed, willfully ignorant, utterly incompetent, or your personal health and other family matters have distracted you so much

from your work that you are completely unaware of actions being taken by the government you represent.

To start with, the NDP government did absolutely nothing to engage with compassion clubs or anyone else operating in the cannabis industry before introducing the Cannabis Control and

Licensing Act in 2018. Instead of working with existing compassion clubs and cannabis retailers that had gone through rezoning and licensing in cities like Vancouver and Victoria, the provincial government was far more focused on setting up their own retail stores. The lack of consultation with First Nations by both provincial and federal governments has also led to a proliferation of illegal cannabis dispensaries on reserves across the country.

When the province created these laws, the B.C. Solicitor General, Mike Farnworth, introduced a new enforcement agency, the Community Safety Unit. No other province has developed a team dedicated to enforcing cannabis regulations, instead relying on traditional police forces to conduct raids if illegal activity is suspected. The CSU has been given sweeping powers of search and seizure, not requiring a warrant to enter a property and begin removing materials they presume are illegal.

If you had been in attendance at the Legislature on April 3, 2023, you would have heard Farnworth explain why the province was creating amendments removing a defendant's ability to use the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as a defense. While debating Bill 30- CANNABIS CONTROL AND LICENSING AMENDMENT ACT, Farnworth acknowledges that the reason for removing a defendant's ability to argue any constitutional questions have...“been primarily around the medical cannabis issue...I think what it comes down to is that regardless of the merits or non-merits of a constitutional question case, the director is not the appropriate person to make that decision...The fact that there's a lack of clarity makes it easier for someone to delay, delay, and delay and draw out the administrative adjudicative process by constantly trying to raise a constitutional issue, for example. So what this makes clear is that the director does not have that authority. So an applicant, if they want to pursue

that, is going to have to go through a court.” Page 11 in the debate transcripts

Far from being a strictly federal matter, the province has created the most punitive system for regulating cannabis in the country. Farnworth systematically removed the rights of defendants to argue the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been violated. Then the NDP voted to make that amendment retroactive to all cases.

So while the VCBC was able to argue constitutional issues in theory when the \$3.2 million in fines were first administered, that defense was retroactively removed by this amendment. This has not been done in any other province. It is common practice for administrative hearings to defer to the judicial system in cases where there are unresolved constitutional questions rather than completely eliminating the ability of a defendant to argue Charter issues.

As for an exemption, the province has it within its power to grant an exemption to the regulations it created and has the power to advocate to the federal government for exemptions. It is willpower the NDP is lacking, not authority.

After the first two raids, the VCBC sought any political help available. A phone call with senior cabinet minister, Murray Rankin, confirmed that the NDP was simply unwilling to support an exemption for the VCBC because they did not want to upset the relationship they were developing with the federal Liberal party. It was conviction the NDP has been lacking, not authority.

This is a sharp contrast to the position the NDP took with INSITE, the safe injection facility in Vancouver. In that case, the NDP did support an exemption to federal drug laws. So again, it is a matter of lacking willpower, not authority.

Minister Farnworth even suggested the province would support the VCBC obtaining an exemption of

some type in a letter responding to Victoria City council in 2020. Unfortunately he did not clarify which sections of the regulations he thought we could get exemptions for in that letter.

Without a clear understanding of the situation, it is difficult for us to have any faith in your ability to raise our concerns with any of your political colleagues. Indeed, it does not even appear as though you have read the letter from one of your political colleagues, the mayor of Victoria. Given this vague response acknowledging our situation, it seems obvious to us that you have only taken a superficial glance at the information available to you.

For example, you completely ignore the fact that high dose cannabis edibles are extremely effective in reducing or eliminating the use of many prescription drugs, pain killers and opiates. With a limit of 10 mg of THC per product, legal edible options are far too weak and expensive for many of our patients. Many cancer patients use upwards of 1,000 mg of THC per day, something that is virtually impossible for patients trying to purchase from the legal medical cannabis program or recreational stores.

Thank you for the apology for making a video bragging about civil forfeiture but, unfortunately, it is not enough. An offer to meet us to discuss the situation, followed by an informed apology, would have been a far better approach. A proper apology would also be done on a video and shown to the same audience the original video was presented to.

While you did not refer to the VCBC in the video, surely you and/or your staff knew what was happening to our landlord? There was an article in the Times Colonist on May 15, 2026, as well as coverage from several other media sources, about the province attempting to seize the building. So, either you do not know what is happening in the community you represent and made the video, or you did not think the threat the province is making

towards the VCBC is a concern to the general public and felt safe bragging about civil forfeiture.

Have you made a video about the buyout the NDP is doing for developers who made too many expensive condominiums? How about a video explaining why the province is still allowing the clearcutting of old growth forests? What about a video telling the public what is being done to make downtown safer? These are matters of public interest that are far more critical than bragging about how much the province is getting from civil forfeiture.

As someone who has lost a partner to cancer, and lost many, many friends and members of the VCBC to it as well, I understand a lot about the disease and how it affects patients. We are certainly happy for you that the medical system has helped you survive from cancer. It is a scary disease that is becoming more common.

Just for clarity, no one is disconnected from relief yet. That will only happen if the NDP government is

successful in shutting the VCBC down, something we are firmly fighting against. So far you have only heard from people because they fear the potential loss of access to medicine will mean they are in more pain and their lives will be

cut short. Our patients are scared for their lives because of what your government is trying to do and you may be underestimating the amount of rage that will be directed your way if the NDP successfully shuts us down.



Many of our patients have been unable to use chemotherapy or have surgery to remove the cancer that is threatening their lives. Some of our patients have even seen tumors disappear or shrink without using any other medication than high dose THC products like our 250 mg THC suppositories. Others that can tolerate chemotherapy, or have had surgery, benefit greatly from the pain relief, anti-nausea and relaxing effects eating and smoking cannabis provides to them. For these patients, losing access to the products and prices we offer is literally life threatening.

No one has asked you to do anything that would interfere in what is happening with us in court. No one expects you to be privy to the inner workings of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. No one has asked you to provide information about the enforcement action taken by the CSU.

As our locally elected representative, what we do hope for is an opportunity to be heard and understood. As our locally elected representative, you should take a keen interest in your constituent's life and death struggles against actions being taken by the government you represent. Protecting the lives of your constituents is not a conflict of interest, it is the primary goal of elected officials.

Rather than asking you to do something to interfere in the judicial process, what we are asking is a fair trial before being shut down permanently by provincial government employees. As mayor Alto states in her letter, "...VCBC has made the simplest and most Canadian request – that it be given time to complete the process of a judicial review of the relevant decisions, with a pause on enforcement until that judicial review is complete. VCBC is asking for what every Canadian expects – a fair hearing, before a sentence is declared and executed."

If you had taken the time to meet with us, then you would understand what we are requesting. Instead you are telling us that you cannot do something that

we never would have asked for in the first place. Being told no before we even had a chance to directly make a request is another example of the cold, callous attitude the NDP government has taken towards our elderly, vulnerable patients.

Clearly, this apology is unsatisfactory to us and you are offering no resolution at all, in the short or long term. If you consider sending a form letter sent out to the VCBC, and those who wrote in support of us, to in any way be a resolution, then you are delusional. We were not asking for a resolution from you, we were just hoping you would hear our concerns and help us have a fair trial.

As we mentioned, we believe strongly in the judicial system and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Pretending we want you to apply political pressure to the courts misrepresents our position. What we are requesting is simply that we get that day in court before the club is shut down with administrative procedures, fines, raids and civil forfeiture.

It is ironic to hear you say that you are not wanting to apply political pressure to independent offices. You have already told us that you have brought our concerns up with the current Solicitor General, Nina Krieger, though we assume that the issues you raised were different from the concerns we actually have. So it appears that you really can apply influence on the Minister of Public Safety and her team, even if it is limited.

The CSU is obviously able to apply constraint when they want to. While we have been raided 4 times since legalization, they could have come here much more than that. Historically, the Victoria Police Department did not raid the club for the last 15 years of prohibition, so there has been an understanding in the law enforcement community that our patients have been protected by the courts and the Charter.

If political pressure does not affect independent offices, then how do you explain why the cannabis store operating outside of the regulatory system two blocks away from the VCBC has never been raided by the CSU? Just around the corner from the club, the Society of Living Intravenous Drug Users, SOLID, has formed 4 Directions, a non-profit cannabis distributor that also sells products outside of the legal system. The main difference between the two cannabis distributors is that instead of requiring a medical document like the VCBC, they only ask people to sign a form stating that they are purchasing from 4 Directions to avoid buying drugs on the street.

Another major difference between the two groups is that the VCBC has never received any government funding from any level. On the other hand, SOLID has built up a range of programs over the years using government funds to support services and buy buildings, like the one housing the illegal cannabis store now run by 4 Directions. It is infuriating to have the province seizing property from a hard-working landlord to punish a long-standing compassion club helping patients, while blocks away another similar non-profit carries on with political impunity.

We have attempted to meet with our local MP, Will Greaves, but he has refused to meet with us directly, instead getting his staff to have a zoom meeting with us and send him some notes. That is more than you have done for us but still frustrating. Of course, his staff's response is that the CSU and the enforcement actions we are facing are within the authority of the province, but they will take our concerns about the federal medical cannabis program to Mr. Greaves and Health Canada.

The federal Minister for Public Safety and federal Minister of Justice have absolutely nothing to do with this matter. On one hand, you proclaim this is a federal matter and refer us to federal politicians. But on the other hand, you admit you have spoken about us to the BC Solicitor General and her team

because you know they are behind these enforcement actions.

If you understood the situation you would actually be referring us to the federal Minister for Health Canada. As you state, Health Canada is the body responsible for designing the federal medical cannabis program. Health Canada should be the focus of our advocacy more than the federal Ministers for Public Safety or Justice.

While this long response might sound angry, we are a group of kind, loving people just trying to help others. We would appreciate having a chance to explain face-to-face what is happening and how you could help us. Even better, we would really love to show you the VCBC, share some tea and give you a chance to really understand who we are and what we are doing. Though we are deeply

distressed at the humanitarian crisis being created by your government, our conviction in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has kept us standing strong. We hope that rather than be dismissive and minimize our issues, you take this situation seriously and learn more about why we are resisting converting to the legal system. Working together we can turn this around and make the legal medical cannabis program function in the best interest of our patients.

Sincerely,

Ted Smith

(Continued on the next page with a Letter of Support from the Mayor...)



(Members of the VCBC protest outside the club during the most recent CSU Raid)

THE CITY OF VICTORIA



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

June 29, 2026

Hon. Nina Krieger
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
501 Belleville St.
Victoria, BC
PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Hon. Niki Sharma
Attorney General
501 Belleville St.
Victoria, BC
AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Sent via email

Re: Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club

Dear Minister Krieger and Minister Sharma,

I write on behalf of Victoria City Council to inquire about the rationale for recent enforcement against the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club (VCBC), and to reinforce our historical support for VCBC.

The VCBC is one of the oldest compassion clubs in Canada, with over 8000 active members since its inception in 1996. Its clientele is primarily comprised of low-income people with chronic illnesses, diverse individuals each one of whom has sought relief from serious medical conditions from its first storefront location since 2001.

VCBC became a nonprofit society in 2012, with a Board of Directors elected by its members, dispensing medicinal cannabis for its membership at a compassionate price. It requires proof of a medical condition – it is not a recreational cannabis outlet.

Since 2001, VCBC has survived five legal trials, including four raids on the club between 2002 and 2003. VCBC has had 15 trafficking charges laid against it, none of which have been successful. It has created national standards and precedents, and in 2015 the club's former

"The City of Victoria recognizes the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations in whose traditional territories we live and work "Hay swa

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head baker, Owen Smith, won a unanimous Supreme Court of Canada decision that granted patients the right to use cannabis oils and derivatives.

Last month the club was raided (more than 3 years after the last raid) during which around \$100,000 in products was seized, and a few weeks later a civil forfeiture notice was served to the owner of the building leased by VCBC, through which the Province is seeking approximately \$3.24 million, tied to years of enforcement actions, raids, and fines connected to the club's unlicensed cannabis operations. According to VCBC, the fines are currently being challenged in court and are pending a judicial review expected to examine whether members have a constitutional right to access the cannabis products and services provided by the club. Provincial targeting of the landlord has resulted in an eviction notice being served to VCBC, making access to its services almost impossible for its most vulnerable clients.

VCBC has provided life changing medicines for ill patients throughout a generation of regulations and laws prohibiting and limiting cannabis use. Given that survival, and the non-profit, community serving nature of its existence, it is perplexing in the extreme as to why the Provincial government would now raid and exorcise the VCBC when cannabis use, distribution and sale is legal.

Raids on the VCBC store and the subsequent eviction notice from its landlord (under threat of civil forfeiture of their building) make no sense in the current environment of cannabis legality, regulation and popular recreational use.

Civil forfeiture is a tool typically reserved for the proceeds of serious crime, and I cannot help but ponder what resources are being used in this enforcement and action that might be better employed to target intense, drug-related criminal infrastructure that have a far greater, and more concerning, harm on communities, families and neighbourhoods.

All that said, VCBC has made the simplest and most Canadian request – that it be given time to complete the process of a judicial review of the relevant decisions, with a pause on enforcement until that judicial review is complete. VCBC is asking for what every Canadian expects – a fair hearing, before sentence is declared and executed.

Victoria City Council has a history of supporting the VCBC, most recently writing, in 2020, to Health Canada to support a temporary exemption from the Cannabis Act, and again in 2022 to Ministers Mike Farnworth, then Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and Sheila Malcolmson, then Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, requesting amendments to the

"The City of Victoria recognizes the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations in whose traditional territories we live and work" Hay sw

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provincial cannabis regulatory framework to remove barriers to deployment of harm reduction services through non-recreational cannabis.

The latest efforts by the Province to attack and defeat the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club threatens the existence of a long-standing community service that has a history of supporting the health care needs of patients who have neither the financial nor systemic capacity to find that care elsewhere. I urge you to halt your persecution of VCBC at least until their judicial review has been resolved.

Your truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marianne Alto'.

Marianne Alto
Victoria Mayor

cc.

MLA Grace Lore, Grace.Lore.MLA@leg.bc.ca

MLA Diana Gibson, Diana.Gibson.MLA@leg.bc.ca

MLA Darlene Rotchford, Darlene.Rotchford.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Victoria Police Chief Fiona Wilson, fwilson@vicpd.ca

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Why Was The Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club Raided?

by Jax Kittel

Why did the club get raided?

The short answer is that the club got raided because the VCBC remains non-compliant with the BC retail cannabis regulations, still.

Why is the club non-compliant?

The VCBC remains non-compliant with the provincial and federal regulations because the current system remains inadequate for patients, and the system is terrible for the industry more broadly.

In Canada, cannabis regulations are split into two funnels. The first funnel is provincial regulations for recreational retail cannabis distribution. The provincial system requires farmers to become Licensed Producers: large-scale cannabis-growing factories. There are systems for micro-licensed producers, and we value those a lot, but those systems are far from perfect. Licensed Producers are required to meet exceptional government standards for zoning, licensing, testing, security, and more that are unduly onerous, expensive, and inaccessible for most cannabis producers. It takes a lot of money, and an MBA and a law degree more or less, to follow the regulations and meet all the standards to become a cannabis producer. From there, cannabis is sent from the LPs to the Liquor and Cannabis Distribution Branch, which is the bottleneck where cannabis gets warehoused. From there, retailers who have gone through insane bureaucratic hoops and paid exorbitant amounts of money for their retail licences and zoning are able to buy the weed wholesale, and then it is heavily

taxed and sold to consumers. There remain 10 mg THC limits on edibles, and the quality of smoked herb varies widely. Budtenders cannot provide advice on cannabis, and consumers are left buying expensive, old, shitty legal weed with little information about the plants.

The province chose to go down this path in highly regulating the industry to the point of inaccessibility because they didn't trust farmers and "criminals" with the newly burgeoning cannabis industry. It was intentional to set the bar and standards for participation so high that the craft growers that built the BC Bud reputation were cast out from entry into the legal market. This system prioritized big corporations who did not have to rely on operating their cannabis businesses to shovel out hundreds of thousands of dollars to wait for licensing and permission to operate. This was most evident when cannabis was legalized and businesses like Aurora and Canopy and many others skyrocketed in popularity and stock purchases. The regulators trusted the Walmart of Weed more than the farmers who had been doing it for decades, and ultimately the value of those large businesses turned out to be inflated and they failed, leaving a wake of financial devastation in their path. But it was too late for small grow shows because the cost of weed tanked and many craft growers closed shop as a result. Therefore, when the big corporations failed, everyone lost. The legal storefront recreational retail model doesn't work for farmers, retailers, consumers, and certainly not patients.

The other funnel for legal cannabis access in Canada is the medical model. Cannabis was legalized thanks to the tireless activism and personal risk-taking of patients in need of this medicine; this can never be forgotten. It remains that patients are the ones demanding the government do better, not the executives behind the Walmart Weed corporations. The current

medical model is regulated federally by Health Canada. Currently, to access medical cannabis, a patient is authorized, not prescribed, access to medical cannabis. To get this “authorization,” patients need to have the following: a General Practitioner, a GP who believes in cannabis, a GP who is willing to take your condition seriously enough to authorize cannabis, a credit card to order cannabis medicine online, a home address to ship the cannabis to, and a privately owned space to smoke that medicine away from neighbours and children. How many people do you think can fit into these requirements? Additionally, our doctors are not trained about cannabis, so they can’t offer any advice or distinction between products. There is also a 10 mg limit for edibles, when patients often need hundreds of milligrams of THC to manage their symptoms. It is laughable to think that this model, where doctors have villainized cannabis for decades, now makes them the arbiters of access to a medicine they don’t respect or understand by design.

In the end, the VCBC is still non-compliant because the provincial recreational model, as well as the federal medical model, remain completely useless to chronically ill and disabled patients. Cannabis users need a place to speak to a human being who is knowledgeable about cannabis and therapeutic use of this medicine for managing chronic pain. Patients need a third space to consume their medicine with their peers, with dignity. The VCBC continues to offer low-cost medicine in a mind-boggling range of doses and products. We put the choice back into the hands of patients to decide what medicines they need to treat their conditions, because they know their bodies the best. We offer storefront medical access because patients deserve access to good advice, the opportunity to learn from other disabled folks, and to retain high-quality and low-cost medicine that they rely on every day.

The VCBC was raided for the fourth time because we continue to ignore the demands of the

government to conform to a system that would abandon the patients we have served for 30 years. Cannabis enforcement by the province is administered from the office of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. The Community “Safety” Unit (CSU) are the dorks in baseball caps who seize our cannabis and burn it in incinerators because they see our work as a threat and a danger—a threat to corporations and the status quo. In 2023, the CSU handed down a \$3.5 million fine to the directors of the VCBC for non-compliance. We have since appealed the fines with the submission of a judicial review, which has sat unanswered for three years. We remain waiting for our day in court to argue that the CSU has no authority to enforce against us due to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that citizens have the right to choose how to treat their own medical conditions. Therefore, we argue that the CSU does not have jurisdiction to raid or fine us, and that the current system is unlawful and unconstitutional for patients in need of access to this life-saving medicine. But instead of giving us our day in court, we got raided again.

The day before the raid was Monday, April 20th, or 420. People often ask why we still celebrate 420 if cannabis is legal. And the answer is that yes, cannabis was legalized in 2018, but that does not mean we have received justice or an equitable legal system that meets our needs. In fact, we are far from free because, as we have seen, we were raided the very next day. The CSU is also now taking action to seize the homes of the directors who have given the most to keep this non-profit organization afloat. The war against cannabis prohibition is far from over. Asking why we are still fighting for cannabis rights and access even though it is legal is akin to asking why we are still fighting racism even though slavery is over. This January, we celebrated 30 years of the VCBC’s non-stop commitment to cannabis activism. That’s 30 years of showing up every day, facing the risk of government enforcement, and doing it anyway because sick people need it. 30 years of operating

a non-profit business with patients' needs centred over profit-making. 30 years of working consistently and tirelessly towards the goal of making medical cannabis cheap and accessible to those who need

it the most. The journey is far from over, and our battles with the province are ongoing, but we are in it for the long haul to win the war against cannabis prohibition.

Statistics Matter

Towards the end of last year, the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club conducted a survey of its members over a couple of weeks to collect some data for its rezoning application. Though the duration during which we accepted surveys was short, we were able to receive about 130, giving us enough to generate some interesting data. Hopefully some more thorough research along these lines can be done later, but for now we are quite happy with the results.

The study began by looking into how many members can access the legal federal medical program, which is mail order only. We learned that about 6% of our members do not have a permanent address and that $\frac{1}{3}$ do not have credit cards, both of which are necessary to purchase from the legal medical program. These statistics highlight the importance of storefront accessibility, as many low-income patients living day-to-day in a cash economy cannot afford to wait for their medicine to arrive in the mail.

Another important component of the federal program is the requirement of a doctor's authorization to use cannabis. With 28% of the members unable to even find a family doctor, there are clearly some significant barriers for many patients trying to access legal cannabis for medical

purposes. These patients could find a doctor on-line, which often charge a fee, but those physicians only get a narrow understanding of the patient's overall situation.

Of those that have a doctor, only 32% of our patients have a physician that actually supports their use of cannabis. That number should be much higher, as clearly every single one of these patients would rather pay money to purchase cannabis rather than use the prescription drugs being offered by their doctors. The fact that 67% of the doctors that our patients see do not condone their use of cannabis as medicine points to the broader problem of the lack of information about the endocannabinoid system and cannabis medicines in the education of medical professionals.

Though a significant number of our patients have held a legal licence to possess or grow cannabis for medical purposes, 27%, only half of them still have an active licence. This is likely because fewer people are growing their own medicine and fewer people are looking to become a designated grower for a patient since legalization. With the number of people enrolled in the federal program decreasing after legalization, it is evident that the program is only designed to accommodate a select few patients, leaving the vast majority of people that use cannabis as medicine outside of the system.

When asked why our members purchase at the VCBC, 100% of respondents indicated that affordability and selection of medical products were significant factors in the decision. Most of the members (78%) consider the product advice another reason why they choose us over the legal medical program. Storefront access was another important rationale for preferring the VCBC, with 82% acknowledging that was imperative, and the fact that the VCBC acts as a community center was

vital to 73% of the members that responded.

Looking at the products that VCBC members require, 56% claimed that access to high dosage edibles was important to them. The same percentage of members stated that access to CBD products was another reason they frequented the VCBC. In both cases, the club has gone out of its way to provide several affordable options, as the legal systems for both medical and recreational are handcuffed by regulations and extraordinary taxes.

While a high percentage of VCBC members (93%) have purchased from a legal recreational store, most of those purchases appear to be for pre-rolled joints and dry cannabis. A small number have tried CBD bud (2%) and CBD oils (9%) from the legal recreational market. In comparison, 34% of the VCBC members have purchased CBD buds and 49% have purchased CBD oils from the club.

These numbers provide some important statistics

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1wuDLrVaVdCHkzufXjNGcREhokL9UWor18aGWmf7Rdlk/edit#responses>

that provide support for the VCBC's claims that the federal medical cannabis program is inaccessible to many patients. Higher costs, lack of storefront medical access, low dosage THC restrictions and limited CBD product selection are some of the main reasons why patients prefer the VCBC over the legal medical or recreational systems. By collecting and providing this information, the VCBC hopes the public and the courts will further appreciate the critical need our patients have for the products and services the club has provided for decades.

This research only provides a glimpse into the reasons the members of the VCBC continue to purchase from the club despite the legal options. Hopefully in the future more studies will be done on the habits of the patients we serve.

The full results from the survey are available at this link.

VCBC Gets Six Month Injunction

After a stressful few months, on Monday July 20, the VCBC got an injunction from being evicted from 1625 Quadra Street for 6 months from the BC Supreme Court. This comes after the club

was raided in April and the province issued a notice of civil forfeiture against the owners of the building the following month. A 6 months window has been granted to allow for the judicial review that the VCBC has filed to proceed without the club being shut down while waiting for that decision.

Since legalization in 2018, the VCBC has been raided 4 times, with the last raid a few months ago on April 21. After the first two raids, the club was

fined \$3.2 million. As a result, VCBC

Vice-President, Clea Maclean, has recently had a lien placed against her property in Cowichan Bay by the province in an effort to collect some of the money. After the recent raid, the province also filed a Notice of Civil Forfeiture to take the building from the landlord, accusing them of accepting proceeds of crime for taking rent money from us.

Once again, the VCBC approached Victoria City Council for assistance. While the city is not able to intervene directly, they have written to the B.C. Solicitor General, Nina Krieger and B.C. Attorney General, Niki Sharma, to request that no further

enforcement actions are taken until a judicial review can take place. In the letter, Mayor Alto is blunt.

“The latest efforts by the Province to attack and defeat the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club threatens the existence of a long-standing community service that has a history of supporting the health care needs of patients who have neither the financial nor systemic capacity to find that care elsewhere. I urge you to halt your persecution of VCBC at least until their judicial review has been resolved.”

Filed late in 2025, the judicial review was submitted after the VCBC finally exhausted all appeals within the B.C. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General against the administrative fines. Negotiations have been taking place between VCBC lawyers, Jack Lloyd and Kirk Tousaw, and crown lawyers. Though no firm date has been established for the end of the hearing, some submissions are anticipated to be entered into court in October. In this situation, the judicial review is on paper, so no courtroom hearings will be held.

The judicial review will focus on the failures of the federal medical cannabis program. Though there has been a federal medical cannabis program since 2001, it has been completely inadequate from the beginning, with many courts striking down various areas of the regulations. While some improvements have been made over time as a result of these court decisions, the program remains a dismal failure for most Canadians using cannabis as a medicine.

When the owners of the building were issued a Notice of Civil Forfeiture in May, they had no choice but to evict the club. Aside from this situation, the landlord's lawyer, Tim Summer, from Crease Harman LLP, acknowledged that the VCBC has been an excellent tenant. However, a few weeks

after giving the VCBC an eviction notice, the landlords were compelled to call a locksmith or risk appearing negligent to the province.

For a few days we thought it would be possible for us to continue using the storefront at 1625 Quadra Street, as long as we were doing sales on the sidewalk out front and did not have any cannabis in the building at any point. It was a scary situation, but with nowhere else to go we did not know what else to do to keep the medicine flowing. Though the landlord was fine with this plan, when Tim Summers found out about what we were intending to do, he immediately called to inform us that the locks would still be put on the doors the next day.

It was hard not to panic. Kirk wrote a threatening email, telling Tim that if we were evicted, we were prepared to sue the landlord for damages for the pain and suffering caused to our patients. After an emergency meeting on Thursday June 11, we took all of the cannabis out of the building in case a sheriff showed up in the morning.

Then, on Friday morning, the idea of an injunction against the eviction changed everything. It was good for the landlord. It was good for us.

As the situation was explained to the Justice in B.C. Supreme Court, she expressed concern that the province was not included in the proceedings. Instead of applying a case manager to this injunction, she gave us a temporary reprieve to ensure we move the judicial review forward. There is no guarantee that an extension to the injunction will be granted after 6 months, but hopefully, as long as some substantial progress has been made, the courts will continue to protect the VCBC until the end of this judicial review.

VCBC Celebrates 30 Years of Illegal Compassion

Saturday, January 24, 2026

Victoria, B.C.: Against all odds, the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club celebrated 30 years of providing cannabis products to patients on Sunday January 25th. The celebration was open to friends and members, young and old, and featured a potluck followed by a talent show and fire spinning with DJs playing in the background. It was held at the Fernwood Community Center at 1240 Gladstone Avenue from 4 to 11 pm.

Despite 8 raids, millions of dollars in fines, pandemics, evictions, too many deaths to want to remember, staff meltdowns and insurrections, board resignations, insurance scares, lawsuits, bylaw officers, Island Health officials, Worksafe inspections, Canada Revenue Agency investigations, and, of course, several snowstorms,

the VCBC has remained open every day possible for 30 years. Along the way, the VCBC has fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, winning a unanimous decision in 2015 that made cannabis edible and extracts legal for patients in the medical cannabis program.

With over 9,000 patients served over 30 years, the VCBC has become a pillar in Victoria and in the history of cannabis in Canada. Starting with a pager and a pamphlet while living in a van, founder Ted Smith has witnessed an incredible transformation in the club and in Canadian society over these three decades. With such a rich history of patient advocacy and deep connections in the industry, the VCBC anticipates the next 30 years will be even more amazing.

Surprise! Unexpected Drug Interactions

Much focus has been placed on the effects of THC, CBD and other chemicals present in the cannabis plant. Less emphasis has been put on the potential drug interactions that may occur with cannabis use. Information about potential drug interactions has been one of the reasons the VCBC has recently hired a local pharmacist to screen new members. One of the most interesting interactions occurs when pepper is consumed. Yes, I said pepper.

Funny enough, peppercorn can be chewed to bring people down from feeling too high from smoking

cannabis. This can be very helpful for people experiencing anxiety from smoking cannabis. However, for those who love to put pepper on their food, this might also be a reason some people do not feel they are getting the high they are expecting.

Mango, green tea and chocolate have been known to enhance the effects of cannabis. Science is only now starting to confirm that these products contain terpenes identical to those contained in the cannabis plant. The synergistic effects of these compounds can magnify the effects of THC in some people more than others, depending on their genetic makeup.

On the other hand, CBD has an interesting, even potentially dangerous effect on the liver. Inside the liver, CBD latches itself to an enzyme that also breaks down a number of other substances and drugs, including THC. This means that if a person has some CBD in their bloodstream, the THC will last longer in the bloodstream as the CBD interferes with the enzymes that would otherwise be breaking it down.

This interaction also happens with several prescription drugs, including some blood thinners, antidepressants and anti-seizure medications. Essentially anything that interacts with grapefruit seed extract will also find CBD inhibits its breakdown, which can be a benefit for some drugs but a concern for others. In the last issue of the Cannabis Digest, I wrote a full article explaining this effect and how CBD can help THC last longer in the bloodstream, with a 4:1 ratio (THC:CBD) being the most effective for fighting cancer and chronic pain.

After learning about these drug interactions, we decided to hire a pharmacist so we can check to

see if new members have any potential issues from using cannabis. At the same time, we are getting the pharmacist to check to ensure new members have been diagnosed with a serious medical problem when they look at their medical file online. Having a third-party medical professional screen new members provides an assurance that patients accessing the VCBC have legitimate health problems and that no complications will result from other medicines they may be taking.

As more information about how cannabis works and interacts with other foods and medicines becomes common knowledge, more products will be appearing on the market that take advantage of these natural synergistic benefits. The 4:1 ratio, for example, should become a standard for most products that are high in THC. With legalization unfolding globally, it will be fascinating to watch as more discoveries are made about this amazing herb.

Events at the VCBC

Annual General Meeting.....	Thurs Oct 22
Thursday Oct 22, 2 pm	
VCBC lounge	
Potluck last Sunday of every month <i>except</i> :	
Halloweek.....	Sat Oct 31
New Years Eve.....	Thurs Dec 31
31st Anniversary.....	Sunday Jan 31
BC Legislature.....	April 20
International Medical Marijuana Day.....	Friday June 11
Fri June 11, 12-5 pm	
Beacon Hill Park	
Beach Clean-up.....	Aug 26
Thurs Aug 26, 2-5 pm	
Ross Bay Beach (wheelchair friendly)	
Annual Camping Trip.....	Sep 5-6

Business Friends of VCBC

The James Bay Barbershop Sean Guinane Barbershop 13-230 Menzies St. 778-433-2288	Soft Touch Bodies Kori Doty <i>Somatic Coaching + Body work</i> softtouchbodies@proton.me 250-551-6595 SoftTouchBodies.com
<i>Gardens Granted</i> Grant Wiebe Landscape and Gardening, Hardscape installs and maintenance 250-986-5669 GardensGranted.ca	<i>Galiano Grow House</i> Adam Clarke Hemp Farm Bed and Breakfast 250-881-4803 GalianoGrowHouse.com
<i>Dee Bee Airbrush</i> Daniel Blais Airbrushing, Painting 250-208-6223 dan.662008@hotmail.com	<i>Handyman Victoria Service</i> Bru Gordon Handyman Services 250-813-1569 HandyBru@gmx.com

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