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Cannabis Authority Issues First set of Conditional Approvals

The Cannabis Licensing Authority has announced that it issued conditional approval for three applicants – two (2) for small cultivators under 1 acre, and a third for a small processing facility – in early January 2017. The granting of the conditional approval has come amidst concerns about the length of time the Authority has taken to review applications since passing its Regulations in May of this last year.

The Authority is maintaining however that the time taken to review the applications is required to ensure that proper due diligence is done and that persons being put forward for conditional approval are fit and proper. This requires extensive verification of information provided on applications. The time taken to process applicants is not unusual, as international forerunners in the legal handling of Cannabis such as Uruguay and Colorado, have taken over two years to issue licenses. Jamaica has managed to advance steadily and within reasonable time, while ensuring compliance with international treaties.

“At the outset, the Authority mapped the application process and noted that the processing of conditional approvals could take up to six months provided all relevant information was supplied. In several instances, information has been requested by the Authority to help verify applications and any delay by applicants in providing this requested information adds to the processing timelines”, noted CLA Chairman Cindy Lightbourne. She also highlighted that the various Government partners supporting the due diligence process were extremely facilitatory and helped to ensure the timely review of the applications.

A fourth application for a small cultivator was also considered, but had to be refused as the owners did not establish that the entity was *‘substantially owned or managed by persons ordinarily resident in Jamaica’* as required in the Regulations.

“This is a good move in the right direction to get this industry going. I am particularly pleased to see that despite popular belief to the contrary all the approved entities are small local companies” said portfolio Minister, Karl Samuda in response to the news.

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Conditional approval is not the end

Conditional approval does not allow an applicant to start operations, but rather brings them closer to being granted a license to operate. In the second phase of the application process the premises or vehicles that entities will be using must be inspected. This is to ensure that all measures required by the Regulations are in place. In addition, each entity has conditions that will also need to be met; such as ensuring all property taxes are paid up, or, in the case of leased premises, that all property owners have formally signed to their consent for their premises to be used in the industry.

The timeliness of this stage is also dependent on how adequately and quickly the applicant can have things in place.

The Authority now has at least twenty additional licenses now being considered for conditional approval, with others scheduled for consideration at the end of February.

###END###

Notes to Editors:

About the Cannabis Licensing Authority: The CLA, which was created by the Dangerous Drug Act, has powers to make and oversee the implementation of regulations for licences, permits and other authorisations for the cultivation, processing, distribution, sale and transportation of ganja, for medicinal, scientific and therapeutic purposes.

About Jamaica's UN Drug Treaty Obligation: Parties to the 1961 Convention undertake to limit the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution and stocks of, trade in and use and possession of the controlled drugs so that they are used exclusively for medical and scientific purposes. The production and distribution of controlled substances must be licensed and supervised.

Interviews: Interviews with Hyacinth Lightbourne, Chairman of the CLA, and other designated Board spokespersons will be available on request

Images: Related photography available on request

Website: www.cla.org.jm

Social Media: Facebook: [facebook.com/TheCannabisLicensingAuthority](https://www.facebook.com/TheCannabisLicensingAuthority)

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