

LEGALIZATION OF CANNABIS IN CANADA

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Background on Marijuana (Cannabis) in Canada

- Medicinal production and distribution regulated by Health Canada
- 26 licensed suppliers in Canada; most in Ontario then B.C.
- Financial Post (2015): cannabis market is estimated to be worth \$5 billion in Canada

Policy in Netherlands

Cannabis legal in Netherlands since 1998:

- Can carry up to 5 grams and possess up to 5 plants
- Public can purchase up to 5 grams from a shop (e.g. café)
- Only residents can follow these laws, that includes visitors

Current policies in the US

- Colorado (2013):
 - Medicinal and recreational uses
 - Adults aged 21 and over can grow up to 6 cannabis plants
 - Consumption in public remains illegal
 - Cannot take out of state, banned at Denver Airport
- Washington state (2014):
 - Adults aged 21 and over; growers cannot be located within 1000 feet of schools
 - Consumption in public remains illegal
 - Non-residents can consume but only within state
 - Washington state Cannabis and Liquor Board regulates private suppliers

Health considerations

Canadian Center on Substance Abuse:

- states youth aged 15-24 and that raises risk of cognitive and behavioural impairment compared to adults

Canada public health association (CPHA) states:

- Some benefits: enhances sense of well-being, feeling of relaxation, enhanced sociality
- Negatives: difficulty concentrating, disorientation, distortion in sense of time, impairment (e.g. driving).

Justice Considerations

StatsCan (2015):

Cannabis offences account for 2/3 (109,000) of all police related drug offences in 2013; possession was more than half of those offences.

High costs for enforcement currently; there could be high costs for enforcement later

Regulation: on suppliers or consumers?: E-cigarettes exploiting legal loophole currently.

Black market considerations

Public Safety Considerations

Canada public health association:

- Combination with other depressants (e.g. alcohol) increases negative affects
- Impairment of motor functions very detrimental e.g. driving, operating heavy equipment
- General performance decreased as it affects memory

Constitutional Considerations

Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs (2001):

Provinces have established some authority over public health, though questions of national public health can be dealt with through federal policies

Courts have upheld federal parliaments' jurisdiction over drug prohibition and control, though there is question as to the specific source within the Constitution.

Recommendations

Staged regulation, over five years:

1. Extensive public consultations
2. Education, curriculum development with provinces
3. Awareness campaigns
4. Regulation with provinces

Final result: legalization and regulation similar to other drugs like alcohol and cigarettes

Conclusion

QUESTIONS?