

Dear Senators,

Subject: Proposed Changes in the Legislation of Cannabis

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with additional information that may help you and your colleagues with the decision making process.

The topics addressed are:

1. Health
2. Education
3. Public Safety
4. Socio Economic
5. Judicial System and Processes
6. Conclusion: Our future generations

This letter is a plea to slow down the decision process with the legalization of recreational marijuana and try implementing changes in increments, so everyone involved can adjust accordingly and until such time that scientific proof comes forth in order to minimize harm.

Also, that the general public, employers, public servants and other organizations serving the public are properly educated and have a chance to get ready for the influx of clients that will be generated by this decision.

The information provided is important as the proposed changes in the marijuana laws will not only change the lives of millions of people, it will change the core values, culture and beliefs of Canadians and possibly the trust and faith they have in their leaders.

This letter is of high importance to me for the love of the people, especially children. This is my mother's day gift to all mothers in Canada.

I appreciate the time that you and your colleagues will take to read this letter.

Sincerely,

Charlotte LeBlanc
Nutritionist, Author
Parent of a son with Cannabis Induced Schizophrenia
Dieppe, N.B.

1. Health

Several government employees compare Cannabis to Alcohol.

Alcohol – On average, the liver takes **one hour** to metabolize one ounce of alcohol. For most people, one ounce of alcohol will produce a .015 blood-alcohol concentration. This means someone with a .015 blood-alcohol level will have little to no alcohol in his or her bloodstream after **10 hours** have passed.

Recreational Marijuana with THC- The total amount of time that weed stays in your system depends on the conditions of the user and how frequently they smoke marijuana. As you continue to consume cannabis, the THC accumulates in the body. In general, here's how long cannabis can be found in your system:

- **For single use:** up to 8 days
- **For frequent use:** up to 15 days
- **For regular use:** up to 30 days
- **For heavy use:** up to 45-77 days
- **Please consider having a lower content of THC sold for people from 18 to 25 years of age.** The brain doesn't stop growing until the age of 25-30 years old.
- **Let's not forget smoking causes cancer.**

Medical Marijuana- CBD – “Making medicinal marijuana available should come with certain obligations and mandates, just as with any other medicine. It should be regulated to ensure its safety, free of contamination and consistent in dosing. It should be kept out of the hands of children, pregnant women and those who are at risk for worse side effects.” – Dr. Sanja Gupta <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/24/health/medical-marijuana-opioid-epidemic-sanjay-gupta/index.html>

The comments and research listed below pertain to my concerns regarding recreational marijuana.

Social and Public Health:

- Please do not overlook, ignore, or discount the significance of the social and public health of our nation and most importantly, the mental health, behavior, motivation and productivity of the rising generation.
- The short video below shows how a mentally healthy youth can morph over a period of weeks, months, and years into an inarticulate stoned teenager (this is what our family experienced) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2rlDuLrAiE>

Research:

1967 - Psychosis

- **The Harris Isbell et al. Study:** A 1967 study by Harris Isbell et al. [reported that THC https://f1000.com/prime/717968257](https://f1000.com/prime/717968257) (the major psychoactive component of marijuana) An ever-increasing number of scientific studies show that cannabis use has triggered symptoms involving psychosis and schizophrenia.
- Today's cannabis with extremely [high THC content](https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive) is addictive: from the National Institute on Drug Abuse <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive>

2014 - Brain Function and IQ levels

- Marijuana use profoundly affects brain functioning and IQ levels, notably of those under the age of 29 whose brains are still developing. Results of MRI studies released April 16, 2014 in a report in the **Journal of Neuroscience** shows that marijuana use in casual users has resulted in brain anomalies, including changes in brain structure.
- <http://www.jneurosci.org/content/34/16/5529>

2013-2018 - Potency

- Dr. Sanjay Gupta warns that the Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) [content of the marijuana today can be 10 times more potent](https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/24/health/medical-marijuana-opioid-epidemic-sanjay-gupta/index.html) than the THC content of marijuana that was widely available several decades ago or even two or three years ago.

Addiction Treatments

"It's more difficult to get kids clean," Dr. Christian Thurstone says, "because they come in less motivated for treatment, and more addicted."

- *Not only can those with developing brains lose [up to 10 IQ points](#),*
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/travisbradberry/2015/02/10/new-study-shows-smoking-pot-permanently-lowers-iq/#209e60452f5b> *but also brain anomalies have been found in users of all ages.*
- *Professor Wayne Hall, National Addiction Center at King's College in London revealed among many other findings [that one in six youth who use marijuana becomes addicted and one in ten adults becomes addicted](#) <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.12703/full>*
- "The epidemiological literature in the past 20 years shows that cannabis use increases the risk of accidents and can produce dependence, and that there are consistent associations between regular cannabis use and poor psychosocial outcomes and mental health in adulthood."

2016 - DNA Mutation – Cancer, Reproductive genes passed on to fetus

- Dr. Stuart Reece – Australia. Regarding recent research findings on the effects of marijuana use on DNA, see <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3607444/Smoking-cannabis-ALTERS-DNA-causing-mutations-trigger-illness-including-cancer.html>. That finding alone should cause any user planning on having children to quit his or her use.
- **Cannabis During Pregnancy Impairs Baby's Brain Development.** See <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/children-cannabis-impairs-fetal-brain-development-012814>
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2016

- **Lawson Research Institute – Ontario Canada - Early Marijuana Use Associated with Abnormal Brain Function, Lower IQ** shows that frequent marijuana users who started using before age 17 "had highly abnormal brain function in areas related to Visio-spatial processing, memory, self-referential activity, and reward processing. Early use was also associated with lower IQ scores. The study found no evidence that marijuana use improved depressive symptoms."
- Article at <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/10/161005160733.htm> Also see release from the Canadian Lawson Health Research Institute <https://www.lawsonresearch.ca/news/early-marijuana-use-associated-abnormal-brain-function-study-reveals> See study abstract <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/acps.12629>

2016 - Second Hand Smoke

- The **Journal of the American Heart Association**. The UC SF Medical Center findings reported that marijuana smoke is more harmful to cardiovascular functioning than cigarette smoke. See <http://jaha.ahajournals.org/content/5/8/e003858>
- "active marijuana use increased the risk of experiencing a heart attack roughly 5-fold within the next hour. Because THC has direct effects on heart rate and blood pressure, the authors focused on the potential link between the elevated heart attack risk and the THC"

2016 - Hospitalization and Poison Control Centres – Very Important!!

- More Colorado Washington and Colorado kids hospitalized for marijuana since legalization Posted 6:14 pm, July 27, 2016, by **CNN Wire** <http://wtvr.com/2016/07/27/more-colorado-kids-hospitalized-for-marijuana-since-legalization>
- *For a 33 page list of references and resources on the harmfulness of marijuana, see <http://GordonDrugAbusePrevention.com>.*

2. Education: (To start this process could take one to two years)

Public Education:

- The general public should be told what are the health risks, ie: cancer, birth defects, sperm motility, cardiovascular that are associated with smoking cannabis. This should be indicated right on the package, and with signs at the dispensary, just like regular tobacco.
- A broader warning is needed, hospitals, doctors' office, and reproductive clinics, for both men and women wishing to have families: Women should not use marijuana before conceiving, during pregnancy, or while nursing. Men should know that the motility of sperm has been shown to be affected.
- Men should also know that marijuana use can lead to the enlargement of male breasts (gynecomastia) and negatively affect the size of male genitalia.
- "It is important that the public, medical personnel, and policymakers understand that exposure to second-hand marijuana smoke is not necessarily harmless. Findings suggest that SHS should be avoided whether the source is tobacco or marijuana." – Journal of American Heart Association. See <http://jaha.ahajournals.org/content/5/8/e003858>

Education on Public safety:

- Safety risks involved with marijuana.
- Penalties involved

Educate Public Service employees:

- Health – hospital staff, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrist
- Law enforcement – police, lawyers, other law enforcing personnel
- Social services and programs
- ER response teams, firefighters

Educate Department of Education:

- Students and teachers starting middle school, to high school. Provide them with the info at the vex point of their lives when everything is changing at a fast pace and going into adulthood. This may help curb the upcoming increasing slope of drug addictions, Mental Health challenges, teen pregnancies and suicides. This is their reality...
- Include Mental Health and addictions at the University level for those studying to become teachers or other professions that provide public services
- Write a **policy** to assure this training becomes mandatory for all teachers, administration and students in all schools, Universities, Colleges: incorporate health risks in curriculum.

Educate Employers; write laws that will give employers:

- Rights to educate their employees regarding addictions and mental health.
- Rights to hire drug free employees.
- Rights to test anyone at work at any time. Saliva or urine.
- Rights to dismiss anyone having drugs or alcohol showing in these tests.
- Right to recommend detox program
- This will keep safety and order in the workplace

Non-Profit Organizations:

Groups that provide services to the general public especially youth.

In N.B., Portage and CMHA has the knowledge to educate the provincial and corporate trainers.

Paula Gordon PhD, teacher at Auburn University is certified to train the trainers on marijuana.

<http://www.auburn.edu/outreach/opce/marijuana.htm>

Educate People Providing Housing:

- Alternative Residences
- Half way houses
- Youth Centers
- Special care housing

Drug Abuse Prevention

- General public approaches to Drug Abuse Prevention and Early Intervention
- Resolving the Controversy Regarding the Effects of Marijuana Use – Back up with scientific facts.
- School-Based Approaches to Drug Abuse Prevention and Early Intervention

3. **Socio- Economic Impacts:**

- What are the societal impacts of marijuana use? This drug involves the use of psychoactive substances. The resources that would deal with these services are already overwhelmed and bombarded with numerous changes to their jobs. At the same time policies are being put in place or considered that would increase the size of an already seemingly intractable problem.
- **2016 - Marijuana Legalization In Colorado: How Recreational Weed Is Attracting People, But Spiking The State's Homeless Rate [PART ONE]** By [Joel Warner @joelwarnar](#) On 06/20/16 AT 4:01 AM <http://www.ibtimes.com/marijuana-legalization-colorado-how-recreational-weed-attracting-people-spiking-2374204>
- **Marijuana Legalization: Pot Brings Poor People To Colorado, But What's Being Done To Help Them? [PART TWO]** By [Joel Warner @joelwarnar](#) On 06/21/16 AT 4:00 AM <http://www.ibtimes.com/marijuana-legalization-pot-brings-poor-people-colorado-whats-being-done-help-them-2378769>
- **Salvation Army: Denver on 'breaking point' with homeless population** Posted 4:58 pm, July 7, 2016, by [Joe St. George](#), Updated at 06:23pm, July 7, 2016 <http://kdvr.com/2016/07/07/salvation-army-denver-on-breaking-point-with-homeless-population/>
- Quote from article above "It's always about perception", Citroen said "That would not be the reputation I would want for my city" (Is this what we want for Canada?) Citroen's advice is to not hide this but to instead use it as an opportunity to lead nationwide on the issue of homelessness. "Don't pretend it doesn't exist because that's not the reality" she said.

Frequently Heard Arguments – "It is my life, my mind and my body and I should be free to do what I want to with them" or "I should be free to use the intoxicant of my choice" and "My use of marijuana is not hurting anyone."

- Is marijuana use a victimless act if it affects the lives of all those around the user, not to mention the life and health and mental functioning of the user, if it has known harmful effects on the developing brains of those who use it or if it affects one's behavior and mental functioning?
- Is it a harmless act if the second hand smoke of marijuana causes children or the elderly or a whole array of other sensitive individuals - mentally impaired, the developmentally disabled, former users, those with PTSD, the aging population - to experience a high unknowingly or against their will?
- What about the overall impacts and consequences for society? With regard to societal impacts and consequences: What are the consequences of a "stoned" citizenry? Can a representative in our democracy afford to have a dumbed down or partially stoned electorate?
- It is a fact that marijuana laws negatively affect more individuals from lower socioeconomic groups, even if decriminalization laws are put in place. "It is not right or reasonable that society should disproportionately make criminals of any individuals".
- David Brooks made a pertinent point in his January 3, 2014 [New York Times op-ed piece](#), "[Been There, Done That](#)" that **law is culture**. "Laws profoundly mould culture, so what sort of community do we want our laws to nurture? What sort of individuals and behaviours do our governments want to encourage? I'd say that in healthy societies government wants to subtly tip the scale to favour temperate, prudent, self-governing citizenship. In those societies, government subtly encourages the highest pleasures, like enjoying the arts or being in nature, and discourages lesser pleasures, like being stoned."

- “The taxes generated from marijuana sales and distribution into a regulated business will benefit the economy? We can then regulate its use more carefully; treat it as alcohol and tobacco are treated; do away with the black or gray markets and intrusion of organized crime and cartels, and keep it out of the hands of those under the age of 18.” In Colorado and Washington and elsewhere where marijuana has been legalized, individuals are continuing to make money-selling drugs in the black market, easily undercutting the prices that the “legal” dealers are charging. Reports indicate the numbers of users of all ages are increasing. According to reports, the number of individuals seeking treatment had already been growing in the years prior to the legalization of recreational use of marijuana. There have also been increases in the numbers of individuals seeking emergency care at poison centers and emergency rooms and treatment for chronic use and psychological and physical addiction.
- The impacts on individuals, families, the work place and workplace productivity and safety in both public and private sector organizations, and society: These impacts in general are increasing and can be expected to do so exponentially wherever the use of marijuana is legal or widely used.
- No amount of tax revenues can begin to equal the costs to society and the economy. No amount of regulation will keep the use of marijuana from increasing where, for the time being, its use is permitted.
- Steven Wright, the comedian, in one of his routines has mentioned the whimsical idea of “putting a humidifier and a dehumidifier in the same room and letting ‘em fight it out” .
- This is an apt analogy to a state trying to regulate marijuana use while at the same time encouraging and/or sanctioning its use: The humidifier (the spreading use of marijuana) is destined to win out, because the dehumidifier will be quickly overwhelmed. **The costs to individuals and to society are always destined to exponentially exceed the tax revenues that result.**

Programs, Policies, and Successful Approaches

- Any and all of these past successes approach were designed to have a major impact on diminishing the amount of drug-taking behavior and increasing the amount of constructive, healthy and creative alternatives to drug-taking behavior.
- **Guide to Ideas on Drug Abuse Programs and Policies**, is available online through the Education Resource Information Center. Check out these studies: 1. Chronic Offenders study 2. Marijuana Experiences, Voting Behaviors, Early Perspective, Regarding Marijuana Legalization. “Legalization may increase perception of safety”. 3. The Relation between Early Conduct Problems and Early Marijuana Use in College Students <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Marijuana> (cut and paste in URL)

Study Report: The Drug Problem in the Americas : Studies Check out: Impact of Marijuana Legalization in Washington and Colorado on Mexican Trafficking Organizations at the link below:

http://www.cicad.oas.org/drogas/elinforme/informeDrogas2013/laEconomicaNarcotrafico_ENG.pdf

Even with relatively restrictive regulation, the result of legalization is likely to be expanded use and dependency (p. 94).

Amsterdam: <https://www.amsterdam.info/drugs/>

The Dutch try as much as possible to **decriminalize the use of drugs**, making it a private matter of each individual, and not a matter for the enforcement apparatus. Production, trading and stocking drugs remain a criminal offence, as in any other country.

The Dutch see the use of drugs as a **health matter**, similar to the use of tobacco and alcohol, and in fact not very distant from problems of obesity, alcoholism and tobacco smoking.

Seattle Washington: <http://www.seattle.gov/council/issues/marijuana-in-seattle>

Oakland, California: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/california-marijuana-oakland-compton.html>

Denver Colorado: <https://www.denverpost.com/2018/03/25/colorado-auto-deaths-marijuana-use/>

Washington, D.C.: <https://qz.com/356003/as-marijuana-legalization-marches-on-some-cities-want-pot-smokers-to-stay-home/>

As never before in the complicated and challenging times that we live in, we need a citizenry and a rising generation that is **educated on drugs** and able to focus on keeping the great experiment that Canada is alive and well. Please visit the above notes sites to read about different experiences in legalizing marijuana in Colorado, Washington, Amsterdam, Denver, Seattle, or Oakland.

In the challenging times in which we live, what a tragedy it would be if we were to allow the erosion of the mental, psychological, and physical health and welfare of our citizenry and thereby thoughtlessly undermine this most noble experiment that so many have fought and died to achieve and sustain.

The tidal wave of drug abuse and its aftermath will eventually come out in the wash with several wounded soldiers. Many individuals have allowed themselves to be blinded and dehumanized to current realities. The end to the scourge will only come when **human values become priority** over, ignorance, denial, materialistic values and that the critical mass of public opinion and actions will effectively turn the tide to the destructiveness of promoting psychoactive drugs.

4. Justice System and Processes:

Based on Individual Options to Address the Use of Marijuana

Recommendations:

- Use the justice system to provide an option to those who are apprehended. This option would provide those using marijuana the opportunity to choose to be remanded to drug court programs that emphasize counseling, education, rehabilitation treatment and community work.
- Through the use of judicial discretion, when such programs have been completed successfully the individual's record of arrest or fines can be expunged. In this way, individuals would not be getting criminal records. The aim should be to help individuals fulfill their potential to lead a healthy and fully functioning life. The drug courts and other similar programs would be to discourage use of mood and mind altering psychoactive drugs and help all individuals of all ages and from all walks of life.
- Removing the restrictions on the use of marijuana simply sends the false message that the marijuana has insignificant, harmless consequences to the individual and society, when in fact its use has significant harmful effects.

Examples of what is being done in other countries:

1. **Decriminalize possession** of less than 10 grams. Impose a fine of \$100 just like a parking ticket; they pay the fine or request a hearing a local court. Criminal charges would still exist for larger amounts of marijuana, keeping tighter controls.
2. No need to legalize cannabis yet. Decriminalizing it is a small step to help the judicial system overloads and proceed with caution until more studies can prove that cannabis is safe long term. What's the rush...?
3. The link below indicates what was done in Maryland U.S. The bill "is designed to discourage drug abuse among minors. A judge would have the discretion to order a third-time offender to attend drug treatment or education programs. Another amendment directs revenue from the citations to the state (provincial) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to combat drug abuse. "removing criminal penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana would allow law enforcement to focus on more serious offenses and would be a first step toward diminishing the social disparity in the way penalties have been applied. It would decrease the number of people whose criminal records for marijuana possession have hindered their ability to find work or attend college".
4. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/pot-decriminalization--for-small-amounts--takes-effect-in-maryland-on-wednesday/2014/09/30/bc379534-48a5-11e4-891d-713f052086a0_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c07bdf42f9b1 - You may have to cut and

paste this link in the url of google in order for it to work. Interesting information on decriminalizing marijuana.

5. Create a Drug Court:

a. Penalties:

- i. High penalties for sale of marijuana to people under 25. ie: long periods of community work and/or incarceration.
- ii. Mandatory, detox, counseling treatment for addictions
- iii. First offense for more than X amount – 40 hours of community work ie., cleaning road sides
- iv. Second offence – detox 6 months ex: detox and leadership skills programs similar to Portage N.B. Lead by people with lived experience.
- v. Hard work never killed anyone. The prison system will change a young person's life forever and not in a positive way. Teaching them taking responsibility for their action will form character.

6. Public Safety:

- a. DUI – Loose licence for 1 year + fine.
- b. Mandatory detox and community work

7. Write a law so that Employers will have the right to:

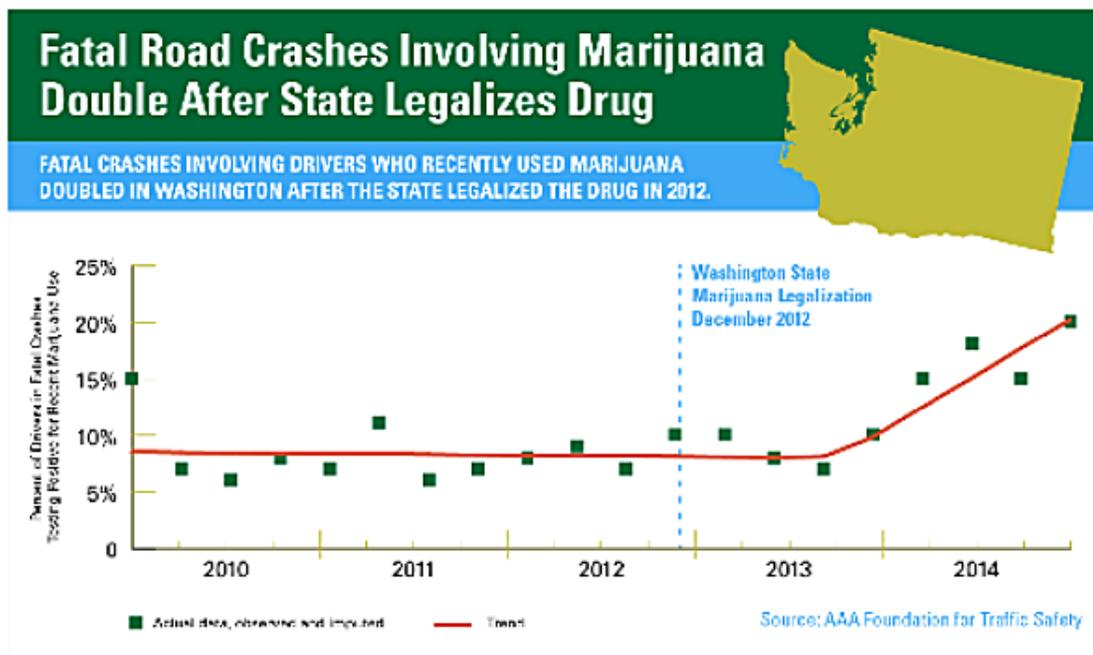
- a. choose drug free employees
- b. test them any time while working or on the employer's premises.
- c. This will create a safe work environment for employees, especially ones operating machinery or where safety is top priority. These tests would also be grounds for dismissal.

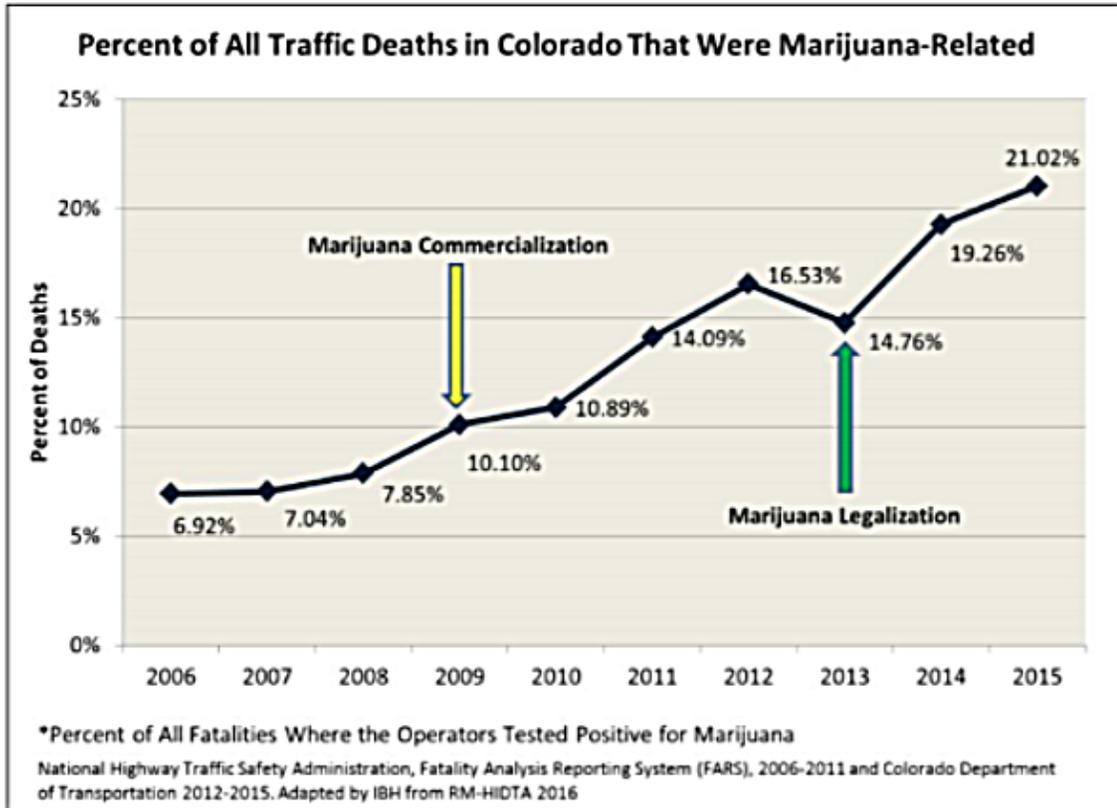
Public Safety

Employers in Colorado are having difficulty in finding employees that are drug free.

Homeless and marginalized people are ending up migrating in this state creating a socio economic burden due to the overload in public services.

- It is important to recognize the increase in fatal car crashes that were marijuana-related in both the states of Washington and Colorado.





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- The impacts of marijuana use include increases in traffic fatalities in the states of Washington and Colorado involving drivers testing positive for marijuana. Anyone familiar with the effects of marijuana on cognition, memory, concentration, judgment, perception, sense of space and time, knows that those effects can be instantaneous and that users cannot safely drive or operate machinery or engage in activities requiring extraordinary concentration and motor skills.
- Surely one would not want a surgeon who was using marijuana to operate on them, drive a taxi or even teach your children.

A few examples of things that need to be sorted out before Bill C-45 is put into action and this list could be very long... Looks good on paper but how is this going to materialize at street level?

Purpose

b) protect young persons and others from inducements to use cannabis; How will you protect, unless you educate the general public and add to regular school curriculum... How will you educate the parents that already smoke in front of their children?

Possession (a) for an individual who is 18 years of age or older to possess, in a public place, cannabis of one or more classes of cannabis the total amount of which, as determined in accordance with Schedule 3, is equivalent to more than 30 g of dried cannabis; **Does this mean that anyone 18 or over can have 30g of recreational marijuana in their pockets and roll up a joint on the street? Think long and hard about this one... because alcohol is legal and a lot of people have it in their Tim Horton cups.**

(f) provide access to a quality-controlled supply of cannabis; Having a lower content of THC sold to people from 18 to 29 years of age would reduce some harm done long-term. The brain doesn't stop growing until the age of 25-30 years old..

I agree that punishment should be severe at the launch of this new law so that people know that you mean business

How will you achieve this (e) reduce the burden on the criminal justice system in relation to cannabis; when...

Punishment: (i) in the case of an individual who is 18 years of age or older, to imprisonment for a term of not more than five years less a day, (**Common sense is that imprisonment will dehumanize a person even more. Mandatory detox, leadership skills and community work will give him/her a sense of reality and eventually a sense of pride**)

(ii) in the case of a young person, to a youth sentence under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, or (**Same as above for youth, send them to Portage in N.B.**)

(iii) in the case of an organization, to a fine in an amount that is in the discretion of the court; or (**Why would an organization be more special, whoever is responsible for this organization has to be shut down and pay the price with a fine and community work or incarceration**)

This is only on the first few pages of Bill C-45.

5. Conclusion:

The upcoming generation and the corporations are and will be what provide taxes to keep our country functioning. It's urgent that **we** keep both of these healthy, mentally, physically and financially. "*So this is not a war on drugs. This is a defense of our brains, the ultimate source of our humanity*" – Bertha Madras Ph.D. ...for the sake of our children .

Decriminalize marijuana for possession of 10g (see Justice section)... Important to Educate everyone ... but don't legalize... for now.

As a country, are you sure you want to start this wheel turning when you see other parts of the world that are totally out of control and it's costing them more than what's coming in. Why start something when you know it has health and safety risks, disrupts people's lives and will only profit very few individuals. The taxes that will be collected will not even start to outweigh the health, public safety and socio economic repercussions of this decision.

People have smoked marijuana or other substances for many generations. By legalizing recreational marijuana you are creating a shift, a new culture, enabling Canadians to smoke marijuana. On the other hand you have told them that smoking cigarettes causes cancer and you have not yet educated them with the risks that are involved in smoking marijuana.

When my son was smoking marijuana, I tried... to tell him it was a one-way street. When he became ill with schizophrenia, as much as I loved him and was there for him, there was still nothing I could do to stop him. My only line to him was: "I love you and when you have had enough you will stop." Very intelligent man and he did stop eventually, but his mental illness has now lingered for 20 years and limits him to the type of work he can do due to the damage done. His line is: "I never thought it would happen to me."

In my personal life, I try my best not to become numb to what's happening around me. I also try to use external reference points to keep me in check, because I am not perfect. My navigational tools are based on two things: having good intentions for everything I do and being honest with myself. I pray you will do the same thing as leaders.

I don't envy your jobs... you as leaders have an extra responsibility. You have to answer to yourselves on your deathbed for making the right choices to preserve the core values, safety, freedom, culture and trust of all Canadians. I'm rooting for you that we will remember many positive changes in 20-30 years from now.