Should Marijuana be legalized?

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“Is there anything right with Canada’s HealthCare System?”

There are many issues that constantly plague the world we live in today, and one of

them is legalizing the use of Marijuana, a psychoactive drug that is estimated to be used

by 4% of the world’s adult population[[1]](#endnote-2). Medical journalists and doctors are in favor of it,

citing its medical properties, while health societies and scientists cite its psychoactive

properties as a reason against legalizing it. There are also the consumers of course,

some of which can benefit from the legalization of marijuana (such as those requiring it

for medical purposes), and the government (who spends billions of dollars on limiting

drug use), who can benefit from legalization as well. The legalization of Marijuana is an

issue that affects everyone, as its use parallels the use of tobacco and alcohol,

legalized drugs that remain in great prevalence today. Marijuana has been used for

centuries, but only in the 20th century has it become such a source for recreational,

religious and medical purposes. Ever since its illegalization in most parts of the world in

the early 20th century, many attempts have been made to legalize it and decriminalize it.

Marijuana is an important issue for Canada, since its use and demand has since

spawned billion-dollar industries in Canada.

Proponents of legalization argue that prohibition of Marijuana in Canada does not work

and should be replaced with regulation instead. The Senate, in particular, stated that

“Scientific evidence overwhelmingly indicates that cannabis is substantially less harmful

than alcohol and should be treated not as a criminal issue but as a social and public

health issue"[[2]](#endnote-3). The committee says that public opinion on marijuana is more liberal than

it was a decade ago and that more Canadians support the use of the drug for medical

purposes. Their main goal is to see a reduction in criminality associated with Marijuana,

which they believe will happen following legalization of the drug. Furthermore, according

to medicalmarihuana.ca, the cost of drug enforcement runs at 1 billion to 1.5 billion

dollars a year, with roughly a third of that related to cannabis. The senate committee

backs up their claims with scientific evidence, and also based on public opinion. The

major assumption here is that they believe that it is less harmful than alcohol, and that

regulation of the drug will lead to a reduction in criminal activity associated with it.

Health Canada has a much different opinion about Marijuana and is against legalizing it,

citing four risks (physical, psychological, safety, legal) as the prime factors against it.

According to Health Canada, Physical health risks include damage to the respiratory

system, cancer-causing agents, impairment of coordination, and interference with

human reproduction. Psychological risks include loss of concentration, psychosis, and

psychological dependency. Safety risks include driving while impaired or even just

crossing a busy intersection. As for legal risks, Health Canada maintains that Marijuana

will remain illegal, despite ongoing debates, the only exception being MMAR. Health

Canada uses scientific evidence and research to support their facts, their only

assumption being that Marijuana is strictly bad for you.

While proponents for legalizing Marijuana do not deny the health effects that Marijuana

induces, they did state other reasons for its legalization. The first argument is the

argument that “Individuals deserve the right to decide whether or not they should use

marijuana. The government should not tell individuals what to do as long as they do not

harm others”[[3]](#endnote-4). This stems from the belief that individuals have the right to choose, and

that the government should not limit those choices if the individual has free will. Another

argument made for legalization is that keeping marijuana illegal is expensive. They cite

the US’s billion-dollar ‘War on Drugs’ as a failed and expensive campaign to rob

individuals of their free will. They also state that prohibiting the use of Marijuana fails

because of the widespread availability of it and might even increase drug use. Other

reasons cited for legalizing Marijuana include its use as a pain reliever, the properties

associated with hemp, and its varied religious use. Evidence was not cited or quoted

from any of these, but rather from observation of current trends and attempts. However,

there was not any evidence against any of these reasons either. They assumed that

Marijuana was less potent than tobacco or alcohol, that government was intentionally

limiting their free will, and that prohibition of the drug will lead to greater drug use.

Those that are in favor of legalizing Marijuana want to resolve it soon, as the senate

committee have mentioned before that it was costing the government substantial

amounts of money to limit criminality dealing with the drug, as well as enforcing the law.

In addition, the senate committee believed that prohibition of the drug only lead to

increased use, as of their 600-page report, they stated that "No one on the committee

wants to see an increase in the use of cannabis. In fact, we believe that the

recommendations you see in this report will ultimately result in a reduction of use of the

drug.[[4]](#endnote-5)." Of course, health societies (such as Health Canada) who cited scientific

evidence against the legalization of marijuana would also want to see a quick resolution,

as they are concerned about the safety, physical and psychological risks of the drug. A

quick resolution for them would mean a healthier society in general.

There are only two viable options I see in resolving this ongoing conflict. The first option

would be to legalize and heavily regulate it, the same way alcohol is regulated now, with

an age limit and certain restrictions placed upon it such as driving under the influence.

While I am not entirely sure whether this option would make the drug more or less

prevalent, or whether criminality associated with it would decrease, I would be more in

favor of at least giving it a try. The other alternative would be to let the conflict continue

as it is. Because I see no resolution that would satisfy both parties, I think letting the

issue continue on unresolved would probably be best for both parties, and no immediate

or drastic consequence would follow it (as it probably would with the first option). All in

all, the future of this issue (as in all other things) is uncertain, since illegalization of

Marijuana occurred relatively recently in our history, and whether it goes one way or the

other could depend on a single, swift decision.

Bibliography (and endnotes):

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Reasons for Legalizing Marijuana http://www.mjlegal.org/essayspeech.html

Health Canada http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/pubs/drugs-drogues/straight\_talk-parlons\_franchement/index\_e.html

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannabis\_%28drug%29 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. http://www.medicalmarihuana.ca/legalize.html [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. http://www.mjlegal.org/essayspeech.html [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. http://www.medicalmarihuana.ca/legalize.html [↑](#endnote-ref-5)