

Store Wars, Part 4 of 4

December 2018

☀ Why legalize recreational cannabis?

The Canadian government is clear on its objectives:

- ✓ keep cannabis out of the hands of youth
- ✓ keep profits out of the pockets of criminals
- ✓ protect public health and safety by allowing adults access to legal cannabis

☀ Illegal cannabis production

“grow op” is Canadian argot for “illicit cannabis growth operation”, itself symbolic of the magnitude of this widespread problem in Canada. Grow ops range (or, have ranged) in size from commercial-scale to single-family homes in suburban neighbourhoods (the sky-high hydro bills from 24/7 use of fluorescent lights a primary clue to enforcement authorities) to a single pot for personal use. Some grow-op operators read the “op” part of the term as “opportunity”: a tax-free financial windfall. The Canadian government intends to make the Canadian argot “grow op” redundant with the legalization of recreational use on October 17th.

☀ Dissenting opinion

Some Canadians of all ages regard cannabis use as a young person’s gateway to substance abuse, and legalization akin to flinging open the gates. As put forth by advocates for a [drug-free world](#) “The chemicals of tobacco and cannabis work on the nervous system and affect both the mind and the body. Some of these effects cannot be reversed.” To their point, clinical trials conducted on cannabis is limited, owing to its controlled drug status, and, the rigorous scientific protocol required of a drug with psychogenic effects.

☀ Recreational use: feds, provinces, cities

Recreational cannabis laws parallel those of two other controlled substances – alcohol and tobacco. Manufacturing, composition, packaging, labelling, distribution channels and locations of use are governed by the federal government. Accessibility to cannabis is under [provincial control](#), including setting the age limit. Provinces will provide public sector access ([Ontario Cannabis Store](#)). Municipalities may opt out of privately operated retail outlets (pot shops). Toronto recently voted to [opt in](#). Suburban cities of Mississauga, Vaughan and Markham voted to [opt out](#).

☀ Wither the days of whacky tobacc-y

Three federal government departments – Health Canada, Justice Canada and Public Safety Canada – share regulatory oversight of recreational cannabis use. [The new laws](#) are designed to take and maintain federal control of the cannabis market. The quality of recreational cannabis must equal that of medical cannabis, and be produced only by licensed growers, who cannot sell. Sale is prohibited where alcohol and tobacco are sold and banned near children’s locales, yet distribution is hoped to be dense enough to block illicit avenues. It is likely that private, 24/7 pot shops will take business away from some of the unlawful “minimum one-hour-delivery” urban sellers. No form of youth enticement – such as gummy bears or idealized advertising – is permitted. Multi-layered, tamper-proof packaging contrasts with the crumpled, no-name rollies or wad-of-weed of uncertain origin (which has prompted cries of inadequate environmental considerations by some users). Above all, price, currently hovering at \$10/gram, is and will continue to be, calibrated to directly compete with the black market.

☀ Brisk business and dearth grass

As of mid- December, Ontario is facing a shortage of legal cannabis, due to insufficient supply from licensed growers. Accordingly, the province will [phase in retail licensing](#), in alignment with supply.

☀ Enter edibles – slightly off centre stage

A 2016 US study reported that 29% of recreational cannabis users had consumed the edible form. In addition, 11-26% of medical cannabis users, in selected US states and in Canada, had consumed an edible cannabis product at least once. Thus, the Canadian government’s commitment to establish edible cannabis legislation by October 2019 may likely appeal to an approximate 30% reach of the cannabis market. However, edible cannabis ≠ food; it will be first and foremost, cannabis. The theme for Food Fax 2019 is Edible Cannabis. Stay tuned. **FF**

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