

FOR AND AGAINST MARIJUANA CULTIVATION

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About 40 years back, the Afghan Government was under a lot of pressure from USA, UK and some other countries to reduce the area under marijuana (Cannabis) cultivation in Afghanistan, since marijuana was used to produce opium and some other injurious by-products. The Afghan Government was offered some monetary help in lieu there of. Some of the cannabis producing farmers were lured by providing them visas to live in USA. These steps and such other measures led to achieve significant success in reducing the area under cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan and in turn reducing the production of opium, etc. However, complete elimination of cannabis cultivation in Afghanistan may never be achieved.

Times change, sometimes the change is very fast. There are press reports indicating change in US policy pertaining to marijuana cultivation. The change seems no less than 180 degrees turn in policy towards marijuana. Some time back the US wanted Afghanistan to put an embargo on marijuana production, whereas now the production of the same has been declared legal although on a small scale and only in few Western states of US, namely Washington, etc. This step has been taken to give a push to the economy of these states. Cannabis cultivation on a very limited scale can also be undertaken even in private lawns of individual people in areas mentioned above.

According to a very recent report (Healthy Outlook; 2019), marijuana is legal for recreational use in nine states and for medicinal use in 30 states in USA. Several states, including New York and New Jersey are also considering legalizing recreational marijuana. Respondents are split as to whether oral marijuana is addictive. Forty-nine percent of

respondents opine marijuana is a "gateway" or habit forming which may lead to other drug use. A local magazine (Prime Time, 2019) reported that about 50% persons involved in shop lifting were young boys who also possessed illegal marijuana.

It may be mentioned here that the US is not the only country, that for some reasons has officially shown some affection for cannabis, the Govt. of Canada too seems to have joined the cannabis club from July 1, 2018, the Canada Day. Cannabis cultivation and processing has probably been legally allowed in the Ontario province of Canada. There is some natural growth of cannabis in limited areas of northern districts of Punjab Province in Pakistan. The same has also been observed in KP in areas adjoining Afghanistan.

During my brief stay in a small town (Sarina) in Ontario, Canada, I could smell that people here were very enthusiastic about legalization of marijuana production, processing and its use in various forms although apprehensions about its use did exist in some circles of Canadian society. Following are the views of some people with respect to the legalization of marijuana cultivation, processing, selling, etc.

1. Marijuana is a very bad thing, unless, of course it creates jobs. "I could not help but smile at the political reaction last week that a medical marijuana company is investing in a massive grow up near Petrolia being able to produce 43 metric tonnes of weed (cannabis) a year". An officer said "I am further pleased to welcome Tilray (a trading company) to Sarnia Lambton'. This new facility in the township of Enniskillen will create good jobs and growth of our community. It is an important step in diversifying our industry and will be a great help to



Canadian patients. A female member of Canada's Conservative Party criticizes Ottawa's plan to legalize marijuana. She was widely mocked on suggesting that the legal pot will turn kids into "drug mules". However, another member of the same party was equally effusive in welcoming the \$30 million investment, stating that he is very excited about marijuana's potential for job creation.

Tilray (a trading company) launched a federally licensed medical cannabis facility in Nanaimo that grows up to one million metric tonnes of marijuana a year. An R&D center there also works on alternatives to smoking marijuana by turning the bud into oils and capsules. Subject to Health Canada approval, Tilray's second grow-up will be located at a 50 hectare property currently known as the Enniskillen Pepper Co.

Phase one calls for 5 hectares of greenhouses grown cannabis, with 50 new employees. The company hopes to produce 51 metric tonnes of medical marijuana annually at both facilities by the end of 2018. And Tilray has big plans. Within five years, it expects to have plants growing under 50 hectares of glass just north of Petrolia, with 200 to 250 people working full-time in cultivation, production and administration. With numbers like that, politicians were falling over themselves with praise at the announcement, even those from law-and-order parties historically opposed to marijuana use of any kind.

The irony, of course, is that rural Lambton has long been a hotbed of marijuana cultivation, until a few years ago, the police used a helicopter each September to fly over local farm fields to spot and destroy every marijuana plant it could find.

Legalized Marijuana Raises Many Questions: Ontario's plan to let the concerned department run the first 150 marijuana stores when Ottawa (capital of Canada) legalizes pot sale next year. The first 40 cannabis outlets, which will be separate from liquor stores will appear next July in areas where "dispensaries" are illegally now selling weed

(cannabis). The Sarnia municipality mayor said it is also unclear what, if any, of the revenue the province (Ontario) will get will be shared with us to fund the cost of enforcement. We need assistance we should be sharing the revenue just as we do in case of slot machines.

The legal age for purchase and consumption will be 19, the province said. In addition to the retail locations, marijuana will be available for purchase online.

The federal government is earmarking \$274 million for policing and border enforcement associated with legalized recreational pot. Nearly half of the money will be used to train front line officers in how to recognize drug-impaired drivers and increase the use of drug screening devices. Under proposed federal legislation, police could demand a saliva sample from a driver suspected of having drugs in his or her system. If the saliva test indicated a possible offence, the driver could be examined by an evaluating officer or required to provide a blood sample.

Medical Marijuana Clinic Opens in Sarnia

The new clinic makes it easier to obtain medical marijuana. It is no different than your regular family doctor referring you to a specialist. "We are just a different kind of specialist. Medical marijuana service has operated in Canada since 2001 and the Sarnia Office is its 20th location. New patients can be referred by their own doctor or complete a private assessment at the clinic with the patient speaking to a doctor on video conference call, which is similar to Skype or Face Time. It is the new age of medicine. If approved, access will be provided to Canada's 38 licensed medical marijuana producers, as well as education and guidance on specific strains and products in plant form, drops or tablets.

The vast majority of our patients have very, very little knowledge about the process and the product. Medical marijuana is often taken as treatment for pain as well as nausea from cancer treatment. It is also used by people suffering from asthma, post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions. One



of the side effects of medical marijuana is a great night's sleep. Really, the sky is the limit.

The Cannabis plant contains more than 400 individual chemicals, and strains are produced to emphasize higher or lower levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). The sense of being "high" comes with the THC while CBD is hailed for pain relief. With the clinics help and physician's guidance, patients select a product that suits their conditions. "What a lot of people do not understand is you do not have to get high to get pain relief. Medical marijuana clinic has a "weeding out" process to determine whether someone truly

needs medicinal help or is just seeking recreational pot. Many of the company's clientele are over 40.

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