

FAQs regarding a study to evaluate potential impacts of cannabis regulation

For more frequently asked questions, visit: <http://stoptheviolencebc.org/frequently-asked-questions/>

Why does BC need a study to evaluate the potential impacts of cannabis regulation?

Ideally, a new system of cannabis regulation should be rigorously evaluated to measure for expected benefits (e.g., tax revenue to governments as a proxy for funding removed from organized crime) and closely monitor for any unanticipated harms, such as increased cannabis use. This type of scientific evaluation could inform future policy development in this area and provide insight into tools for enforcement of current and future regulations.

What is the purpose of the study and who will be involved?

Stop the Violence BC proposes that a research group develop and coordinate an ethically approved research trial to assess the impacts of a government-sanctioned cannabis retail establishment for adult recreational cannabis users.

The facility would operate with the objective of improving community health and safety in the following ways:

- (i) Reducing the proliferation of hazardous and illegal grow operations that exist as a result of cannabis prohibition
- (ii) Reducing revenue that currently goes to organized crime as a result of cannabis prohibition
- (iii) Raising tax revenue to governments – ideally earmarked for underfunded health and social programs including targeted funding for addiction treatment
- (iv) Assess the impacts of cannabis regulation on users and the local community

It is envisioned that the project be overseen by a steering committee comprised of key stakeholder groups from public health, addiction medicine, police, criminology and government. Together, the steering committee would recruit a team of researchers from leading BC universities to apply to the Federal Ministry of Health for an exemption from Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Once the exemption is granted, the steering committee would ensure timely feedback and communication between local community, policymakers, health officials, law enforcement, business groups, prospective site users and the research team.

Specific details of the project, such as study length, specific location, product sourcing, costs, etc., will be determined by the research group in accordance with relevant municipal, provincial, and federal government guidelines, rules, regulations, and laws.

What is a Section 56 exemption?

The Controlled Drugs and Substances act (CDSA) is Canada's federal drug control statute which identifies various classes of "controlled substances". Cannabis is one of these controlled substances.

Under Section 56 of the CDSA, the health minister has the jurisdiction to provide an exemption to the CDSA for a medical, scientific, or public interest purpose. This exemption means that facilities or physicians, under very specific guidelines, may distribute and/or oversee the consumption of an otherwise controlled substance if doing so is of relevance to a matter of medical, scientific, or public interest.

For example, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's leadership, the federal government of Canada has provided Section 56 exemptions to researchers for research studies on prescription heroin in treating opioid addiction and MDMA (ecstasy) in treating post-traumatic stress disorder. For the purpose of this intervention, a Section 56 exemption would be required in order to research the impacts of a pilot trial of taxing and regulating the adult use of cannabis.