

Election 2013 Question

British Columbia has experienced major unintended consequences resulting from marijuana prohibition including the proliferation of illegal marijuana grow ops and related organized crime concerns. Researchers in B.C. are interested to apply for an exemption under Section 56 (s. 56) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which would allow for a federally approved scientific evaluation of piloting a regulated market for adult recreational marijuana use. The small study would be ethically approved and would assess if a strictly regulated (i.e. legal) system for adult marijuana purchases could cut profits to organized crime, raise tax revenue and better protect young people from the free availability of marijuana that exists under prohibition. The study would involve a pilot site in one community requiring key stakeholder support, and would be halted if unanticipated harms emerged.

If your party forms government, would you prevent a small-scale research trial involving an s. 56 exemption and examining if a strictly regulated (i.e. legal) system for adult marijuana purchases could cut profits to organized crime, raise tax revenue and better protect young people from the free availability of marijuana that exists under prohibition?



Today's BC Liberals

Michaela Montaner

Coordinator, Stop the Violence BC

Dear Ms. Montaner,

Thank you for your Election 2013 question. As you point out in your preamble, the federal government is responsible for regulating marijuana and any changes to the current structure, including research trials, would have to be initiated by them.

If the federal government decides to permit a research trial such as you describe, our government would certainly give serious consideration to any provincial approvals that would then be required. We would be pleased to meet with you regarding the matter should the federal government make such a decision.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address your coalition.

Sincerely,

Today's BC Liberals

Stop the Violence BC

Election 2013 Question

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If your party forms government, would you prevent a small-scale research trial involving an s. 56 exemption and examining if a strictly regulated (i.e. legal) system for adult marijuana purchases could cut profits to organized crime, raise tax revenue and better protect young people from the free availability of marijuana that exists under prohibition?

Answer: The BC NDP believe that marijuana should be decriminalized, but marijuana is regulated by the Federal government and any change would have to be made at the Federal level. In addition the Provincial Government has no authority to circumvent the Federal Government on the administration of the the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. If the federal government was prepared to issue a section 56 exemption we would not prevent a small-scale research trial.

Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

Exemption by Minister

56. The Minister may, on such terms and conditions as the Minister deems necessary, exempt any person or class of persons or any controlled substance or precursor or any class thereof from the application of all or any of the provisions of this Act or the regulations if, in the opinion of the Minister, the exemption is necessary for a medical or scientific purpose or is otherwise in the public interest.

Marginal note: Powers, duties and functions of Minister or Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Green Party of BC
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Dear Ms. Montaner,

The Green Party of BC supports an end to the prohibition of cannabis. If the BC Greens were to form the new government, we would not prevent a small-scale research trial involving an s. 56 exemption and examining if a strictly regulated (i.e. legal) system for adult marijuana purchases could cut profits to organized crime, raise tax revenue and better protect young people from the free availability of marijuana that exists under prohibition. In fact, BC Greens would support such a trial.

The BC Greens propose to regulate and control production, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of cannabis and other substances. Cannabis would be taxed alongside tobacco and alcohol and would be produced and distributed through licensed outlets.

The BC Greens recognize and agree with British Columbians in approaching substance use as a public health matter instead of a criminal matter. Greens would focus on the reduction of substance abuse, rather than the criminalization of it. By controlling its production and distribution, Greens would be able to focus resources on public health rather than on stopping the criminals and organized gangs that currently distribute these substances. In this way, these criminals would no longer have the control and power over these substances and the people who choose to use them would be able to do so without facing criminal charges while still having access to health and addiction services.

The Green Party of BC has four key goals with regard to substance use. These are:

- Establishing drug policies based on clear scientific evidence
- Treating substance abuse as a health problem, not a criminal problem
- Reducing crime associated with marijuana prohibition
- Helping addicts to stop abusing drugs

In order to achieve these goals, BC Greens will:

- Support the use of evidence-based, harm reduction practices such as needle exchanges, substitution treatments, and safe consumption sites
- Work toward regulation and control of the production and distribution of cannabis through licensed outlets
- Support regulated access to currently illegal drugs through a physician's recommendation
- Implement school-based drug education focused on science, reason, and evidence-based public awareness
- Ensure that regional health authorities in British Columbia offer a variety of options for treatment of addictions of all kinds
- Regulate access to substances traditionally used for spiritual purposes and provide funding for research into their therapeutic potential

Greens therefore would support regulating substance use, especially cannabis. These substances could provide another source of revenue by being taxed in the same way tobacco and alcohol is, while shifting the resources currently used to punish substances users and distributors to health services that would help addicts and educate the general population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Atwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J" and a distinct "A".