

Majority of British Columbians Support Pilot Study to Evaluate Taxation and Regulation of Marijuana

New poll shows 73 per cent support research trial to evaluate whether taxation and regulation of marijuana could reduce profits to organized crime; questionnaire sent to B.C. political parties

Vancouver, BC [April 18, 2013] — A new Angus Reid poll released today shows that British Columbians overwhelmingly support the province undertaking a pilot study to evaluate the taxation and regulation of adult cannabis use.

The survey, conducted between April 8 and 9, found that 73 per cent of British Columbians support a B.C. research trial conducted by local experts and health scientists to evaluate whether the taxation and strict regulation of adult marijuana use could reduce profits to organized crime and better prevent youth access to the drug.

Furthermore, 44 per cent of British Columbians say their perception of a provincial political party would improve if they supported a trial of this nature, compared to 33 per cent who say their opinion would be unchanged and just 12 per cent who said their opinion would worsen.

“These results clearly indicate British Columbians, regardless of their political affiliation, would welcome researching a new approach to marijuana policy involving the taxation and regulation of adult use,” said Mario Canseco, Vice President, Angus Reid Public Opinion. “Consistently our polling results are showing the public is demanding a new approach and turning away from strategies like mandatory minimum sentences for marijuana offenses.”

Stop the Violence BC (STVBC) has issued an Election 2013 questionnaire to B.C.’s four major political parties in advance of the May 14th election asking whether they would support a research trial of cannabis regulation.

“British Columbians clearly want their politicians to show leadership on marijuana policy reform,” said Geoff Plant, who served as B.C. attorney general from 2001 to 2005 under the BC Liberals. “With the province facing an election in a few weeks, now is the time for all political parties to let the public know whether they will support the proposed research trial of cannabis taxation and regulation.”

An Angus Reid poll from November 2012 showed 75 per cent support for the taxation and regulation of marijuana, and voters in both Washington State and Colorado recently passed initiatives to tax and regulate the adult use of marijuana.

“What we’ve witnessed in Washington State is the public no longer tolerating poorly conceived laws and rejecting marijuana prohibition as an enormous failure in the United States,” said John McKay, the former U.S. attorney for the Western District of Washington State. “British Columbia has an opportunity to join Washington State and show the world, criminal prohibition is a costly failure and public health and safety will be better served by legalization, strict regulation and capturing, through taxation, the profits we’ve handed over to the drug cartels and thugs for decades.”

STVBC is advocating for a research group to develop and coordinate an ethically approved research trial to assess the impacts of a government-sanctioned cannabis retail establishment for adult recreational cannabis users. Such a trial could legally operate under a Section 56 exemption of the federal Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and would assess impacts on users and the local community as well as estimate operation costs and potential tax revenue. The federal government has recently provided Section 56 exemptions to assess the impacts of heroin prescription in the Downtown Eastside as well as a trial of prescription MDMA (ecstasy) for post-traumatic stress disorder.

“Our politicians have been out of step with public opinion on this issue for too long,” said Ujjal Dosanjh, former New Democratic premier of B.C. “With the support of nearly three-quarters of British Columbians on the one hand, and prohibition-related violence and criminal activity across B.C. on the other, our provincial leaders have to support researching alternatives.”

The proposed research trial is presently being designed, and initial proposals suggest it could operate with the objectives of improving community health and safety by: reducing unsafe and illegal grow ops through sanctioned safe cannabis producers, redirecting organized crime profits to fund addiction treatment and other underfunded health and social programs, and assess for potential negative consequences for trial participants and the local community.

Related materials

For electronic copies of the following materials, please visit www.stoptheviolencebc.org/election2013.

- Questionnaire
- Polling data
- FAQs
- This press release

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About Stop the Violence BC

Stop the Violence BC is a coalition of law enforcement officials, legal experts, public health officials and academic experts from the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria and the University of Northern BC. Coalition members have come together to engage all British Columbians in a discussion aimed at developing and implementing marijuana-related policies that improve public health while reducing social harms, including violent crime.

For a full listing of coalition members and to learn more about the coalition, please visit www.stoptheviolencebc.org

For more information about Stop the Violence BC or to interview a coalition member, please contact:



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