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Pot laws out of touch, says lobby group

Last Updated Thu, 25 Nov 2004 16:54:50 EST

OTTAWA - Ottawa's policies on marijuana use are out of touch with Canadian public opinion, says a group campaigning to reform cannabis laws.

- INDEPTH: [Marijuana](#)

A poll released Thursday by the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws in Canada (NORML Canada) shows almost six in 10 Canadians say adults who possess small quantities of marijuana for personal use should be left alone.



The poll also suggests the majority of Canadians say spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year to enforce marijuana laws is a "poor" or "very poor" use of police resources.

The poll follows Wednesday's Canada Addiction Survey on the use of marijuana and other drugs. That survey suggested that the number of people who admitted to using marijuana at least once in a year doubled in the last 10 years – from 7.4 per cent a decade ago to 14 per cent last year.

- FROM NOV. 24, 2004: [Marijuana use doubled over past decade: study](#)

"The people are way ahead of government on this issue because they understand prohibition isn't working now and it never will," said Jody Pressman, executive director of NORML Canada, in a news release. "Taxing and regulating cannabis would generate billions of dollars in new revenue for social programs and finally remove the criminal element from the sale and distribution of marijuana."

EXTERNAL LINKS

- [NORML Canada](#)

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The NORML Canada poll was conducted by SES Research Inc. between Oct. 26 and Nov. 1. It is based on a random national telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 per cent, and is considered accurate 19 times out of 20.

Paul Martin's Liberals reintroduced a bill earlier this month that would decriminalize marijuana possession and replace criminal charges with fines for anyone caught with up to 15 grams of the drug.

- FROM NOV. 2, 2004: [Liberals reintroduce marijuana bill](#)




This doesn't mean marijuana will be legalized in Canada. "Marijuana use is and remains illegal," Justice Minister Irwin Cotler said when the bill was reintroduced. "What we have done here is alter penalty frameworks."

If the bill passes, adults who are caught with less than 15 grams of marijuana could be fined up to \$400, but would not be left with a criminal record.

Cotler said the new possession bill will help police forces focus on more serious offences like marijuana growing operations and trafficking, as well as links between the marijuana trade and organized crime.

Written by CBC News Online [staff](#)

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