



TODAY'S EDITION



February 21, 2003

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Friday, February 21, 2003

## It's all spliff and polish

### Canucks take shine to easing pot laws

By BILL RODGERS, Parliamentary Bureau Chief

THE COUNTRY is going to pot.

According to an SES/Sun Media poll, 69% of Canadians favour decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana.

The survey found that Canadians who were teenagers during the "flower power" '60s were the group most likely to support easing our pot laws.

It showed that 76% of Canadians between 50 and 59 support decriminalization, while 72% of the 40-49 age group agree the laws against smoking dope should be relaxed.

The poll surveyed 1,000 people between Feb. 2 and Feb. 11. The poll is accurate plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

There was strong support for decriminalization in every region. Only 25% of those who responded to the survey opposed our marijuana possession laws going up in smoke.

"The opinions of Canadians may have been influenced by numerous media stories related to the therapeutic use of marijuana for cancer patients," said SES president Nik Nanos.



QUICK HITS

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Earl McRae  
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NEWSPAPERS / MAGAZINES



Sun Media Newspapers

Liberal, Tory and Alliance MPs say pot shouldn't be considered a harmless recreational drug even though a Senate committee last fall recommended legalizing the smoking of pot for anybody older than 16. The committee called the criminal laws on possession of weed outdated.

Legalizing pot smoking would make Canada one of the most cannabis-friendly nations in the world.

At the time, the Canadian Police Association lashed out at the idea, calling it "a back-to-school gift for drug pushers."

Justice Minister Martin Cauchon doesn't plan to make pot legal but favours a fine instead of a prison sentence for the possession of 30 grams or less.

Toronto-area Grit MP Dan McTeague says there needs to be a national debate on the issue.

"As if we have not had the lesson of the destruction that alcohol has wreaked on families," he said. "Do we need another form of mind-bending products that are going to ruin people's lives?"

'WORST STEP'

"It's wrong to go down that road," said Tory MP Elsie Wayne. "That is the worst step that Canada can make right now for the future of our young people."

Alliance Justice critic Chuck Cadman called decriminalization a confusing message for young people because the government is also telling them not to do drugs.

"Then on the other hand we send them a message from the Parliament of Canada: 'Well, what the hell, we'll decriminalize it anyway.' It's just that young people take that kind of a message the wrong way," said Cadman.

REEFER MADNESS

Support for decriminalization by age groups:

Support Unsure Oppose

18-29 71% 4% 25%

30-39 72% 6% 22%

40-49 68% 6% 26%

50-59 76% 4% 21%

60+ 58% 8% 34%

Only real pockets of resistance are among the over-60 set and the Canadian Alliance.

Source: SES Canada Research

**Previous story: Pizza Pigout time!**

**Next story: JTF2 jingle calling for Arnie types**

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