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Mon, February 28, 2005

Canucks in haze on pot Decriminalization plans create confusion: Poll

By **Maria McClintock**, Parliamentary Bureau

Canadians are confused about what the feds mean when they talk about the decriminalization of pot, a new poll shows. The poll of 1,000 Canadians was conducted between Jan. 28 and Feb. 2 by the polling firm SES for Tory MP Randy White.

It's considered accurate to plus or minus three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

White said he was surprised by the confusion.

"The government is doing a very poor job. If they are moving into decriminalization of marijuana, then they should spend hundreds of dollars on television, on radio and in newspapers, explaining this to Canadians," White said.

POSSESSION ILLEGAL

The survey asked: "The Canadian government has recently moved to decriminalize the personal possession of marijuana. Do you believe that decriminalization (a) makes possession legal, (b) leaves possession illegal, (c) unsure, (d) no answer.

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"One out of every two, or 49%, of Canadians believe that decriminalizing marijuana actually makes possession legal," SES president Nik Nanos said the poll indicates.

Of those surveyed, 41% said they believed decriminalization leaves possession illegal. With decriminalization, possession would be illegal but not a criminal offence, like, for example, speeding.

The second survey question asked what the minimum age to possess marijuana should be: 12 years and older; 16 and older; 18 and over; no age; or "unsure." Respondents chose 18 and more than 77.6% of the time.

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