



# Media Release

## Criminal Charges for Marijuana Possession “Up in Smoke” Canadians support decriminalization

Ottawa, February 21, 2003 - A national survey released by polling firm SES Canada Research Inc. and the Sun Media Group indicates that Canadians have an appetite for marijuana decriminalization. Overall almost seven of every ten Canadians surveyed (69%) supported decriminalization while 25% opposed and 6% were unsure.

A national telephone poll completed by SES Canada Research Inc. asked 1,000 Canadians the following question:

*The Canadian government will likely bring in legislation this year to de-criminalize marijuana possession where individuals would receive fines rather than jail terms for the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose giving fines rather than jail sentences for marijuana possession?*

Canadian Alliance voters were the most likely to oppose decriminalization (Canada Oppose – 25%, CA Opposed – 38%). Conversely, NDP and BQ voters were the most likely to support decriminalization (Canada Support – 69%, NDP Support – 78%, BQ Support – 76%).

“The opinions of Canadians may have been influenced by numerous media stories related to the therapeutic use of marijuana for cancer patients,” noted Nikita Nanos, President of the polling firm SES Canada Research Inc. “What these stories tend to do is demystify marijuana and bring it more into the mainstream. In effect, the therapeutic use of marijuana for cancer patients is likely driving a positive image.”

According to Nanos, “a review of the demographic sub tabs indicates that Canadians who were teenagers in the swinging 60s were the age group most likely support the decriminalization of marijuana.”

SES’s National Omnibus Survey is conducted every three months. It is based on a random telephone sample of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age and older and was



# Media Release

conducted between February 2<sup>nd</sup> and February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The margin of accuracy for the aggregate survey results is 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. The margin of accuracy for sub-populations may be wider. Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of the Canadian populace.

Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service marketing and public opinion research firm.

For a detailed review of the survey tables, please visit the SES Research website at <http://www.sesresearch.com> in the on-line polling library.

-30-

**Media inquiries:**

Nikita Nanos, President  
SES Canada Research Inc.  
100 Sparks Street, Suite 1001  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Office (613) 234-4666  
[nnanos@sesresearch.com](mailto:nnanos@sesresearch.com)

Visit the SES website at [www.sesresearch.com](http://www.sesresearch.com)

**SES Toronto**

401-250 Consumers Road,  
Toronto, CANADA M2J 4V6  
Phone (416) 493-1965  
Fax (416) 493-6403

**SES Ottawa**

1001-100 Sparks Street,  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5B7  
Phone (613) 234-4666  
Fax (613) 235-1444

**SES Halifax**

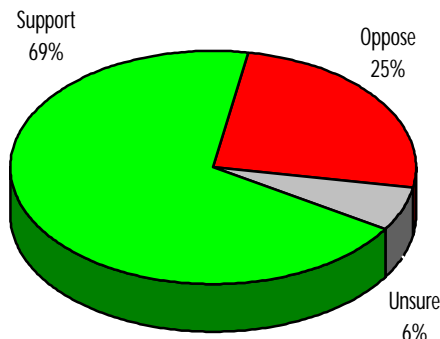
407-1959 Upper Water Street,  
Halifax, CANADA B3J 3N2  
Phone (902) 420-9523  
Fax (902) 422-2388

**SES General Mail**

Postal Station A,  
Box 5804  
Toronto, CANADA M5W 1P2  
Toll-free 1 888 737-5505

# Canada – Decriminalizing Marijuana

## Decriminalizing Marijuana (N=1,000)



## COMMENTARY

Overall, seven of every ten Canadians (69%) support the decriminalization of marijuana, while only one of every four (25%) oppose (6% are unsure).

The only real pockets of resistance to decriminalization is among Canadians over 60 years of age and Canadian Alliance voters (38% oppose).

Conversely, supporters of the NDP and the Bloc Quebecois were the most likely to support decriminalization (NDP – 78% support, BQ – 76%).

## THE QUESTION

The Canadian government will likely bring in legislation this year to de-criminalize marijuana possession where individuals would receive fines rather than jail terms for the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose giving fines rather than jail sentences for marijuana possession?

### Target Groups (+/- index score)

	Support	Oppose	Unsure
Atlantic	+4	-2	-2
Quebec	+1	-1	0
Ontario	0	-1	+2
West	-2	+4	-1
Men	-1	+2	-1
Women	+1	-1	0
18 to 29	+2	0	-2
30 to 39	+3	-3	0
40 to 49	-1	+1	0
50 to 59	+7	-4	-2
60 plus	-11	+9	+2
Liberal voters	+3	-3	0
CA voters	-13	+13	0
PC voters	-1	+4	-2
NDP voters	+9	-7	-2
BQ voters	+7	-6	-1
Undecided	-6	+5	+2

Note: Plus/minus index scores are based on the difference between the sub-group and the sample average. For example the -13 score noted above among CA voters indicates that they are 13 per cent less likely to support decriminalizing marijuana compared to the average Canadian voter. Readers should focus on scores greater than +/-5.

## THE METHODOLOGY

Between February 2<sup>nd</sup> and February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003, SES conducted a total of 1,000 telephone interviews across Canada with eligible voters as part of the SES National Quarterly Omnibus. Aggregate results of the survey are accurate  $\pm$  3.1%, 19 times out of 20.

Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of Canadian voters.

## ABOUT SES

Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service public opinion research and management consulting firm.

In order to maximize turn-around time and increase efficiency, SES has a 110-line call centre complete with a predictive dialer. SES is regularly called upon by corporate, government and para-public clients in Canada and the United States to conduct research and provide strategic advice.

For more information on our full range of services please visit our website

[www.sesresearch.com](http://www.sesresearch.com) or contact:

Mr. Nikita Nanos at (613) 234-4666 ext.400 or [nnanos@sesresearch.com](mailto:nnanos@sesresearch.com)