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## Social Issues: Legalizing Marijuana In Modern World

Marijuana was declared legal in Canada as of October 17, 2018. As prime minister Justin Trudeau quoted “we’ve put forward a process on obtaining pardons that are simplified, that will be free for people who have simple possession of cannabis criminal records, this is going to make a real difference for people who have been impacted by the previous regime” (Proudfoot, 2018). Although there are still laws in place, to keep marijuana possession and use in control, I strongly feel that this is a social issue that affects many. As a member of this society, I feel uncomfortable leaving my home knowing that someone could be driving under the influence, or even simply having the stench of marijuana everywhere I go. The following argument is based on research on the social impacts and effects of marijuana use.

Marijuana use is known for its “relaxing effects” on the mind and body, but it comes with its fair share of consequences as well. An article by Angela Bosse of CBC news included a statement from Dr. Serge Melanson, the president of The New Brunswick Medical Society. He stated that “legalization could impact the number of vehicle accidents he sees in the emergency room” (Bosse, 2018). Due to the mind-altering effects of marijuana, the chances of aggressive, behavior is likely to occur (Condrón, 2019). Aside from the short- and long-term effects of marijuana use, people who smoke pot in public also put non-smokers at risk for secondhand smoke.

Second-hand smoke poses many health risks for those who are in areas where others are smoking. “Second-hand smoke causes numerous health problems in infants and children, including more frequent and severe asthma attacks, respiratory infections, ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

Since the law was passed, my post-secondary institution has taken the initiative to make the campus a smoke-free campus. I am grateful for the change the school has made because I feel comfortable waiting for the bus without having to inhale second-hand smoke. Being around those who smoke, has taken a toll on my asthma, and now that the school is now smoke-free, I can feel what a “breath of fresh air” feels like. This has also allowed many students to cut down on smoking, which is also beneficial to their own well-being and promoting healthier lifestyle choices.

From a sociological point of view, if the government can have more control over the marijuana laws especially for youth, this will help prevent any long-term issues. This is an example of manifest functions (Benoit, Burkowicz, Macionis, Jansson, 2016). A structural functionalist (Benoit, Burkowicz, Macionis, Jansson, 2016) on the other hand will be all for the idea of weed being legalized as it is practically eliminating the chances of them getting in trouble with the authorities for possession. Many of those from cultures, (Benoit, Burkowicz, Macionis, Jansson, 2016) other groups and religions that incorporate the use of marijuana within their values may also support the idea of marijuana becoming a legal drug.

Many drug dealers may have lost their source of income since the government is now making money for selling a previously illegal drug. If the government is trying to prevent youth, and pregnant women from drug abuse, they shouldn’t be adding more to the mix. As stated by the

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Government of Canada Cannabis information webpage, “Close to 1 in 10 adults who have ever used cannabis will develop an addiction to it. This statistic rises to about 1 in 6 for people who started using cannabis as a teenager” (Canada, 2019). This statistic itself should have been enough to prevent the legalization of marijuana, if not have stricter laws.

[image: ] This image was retrieved from a Toronto Star Article. (RANDY RISLING / TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO) (McIntosh, 2017). This image portraying the Canadian flag with a marijuana leaf instead of a maple leaf might offend some Canadians. Canada should be represented not for the drug that we had just legalized. This shows how society values marijuana, and how proud they are that it is now legalized when there are far more issues in Canada that need to be addressed such as child poverty.

The media has also added on to the promotion of weed being legalized allowing the opportunity for more adolescents to be aware of where it can be accessed and how they can access it. I strongly feel that if they are going to advertise to people that marijuana is becoming legalized, they should also take the initiative to educate people and teach them the effects of marijuana use. By teaching the effects the government can assist in preventing drug abuse.

Another solution to control marijuana possession is to have a system in place to track how much marijuana has in possession at once. This can also monitor how much this person is spending on marijuana and track down those who are selling to minors. The legal possession amount should also be lowered, as some may be stocking up 30 grams at a time. Finally, another solution would be to have designated smoking areas that are closed off. By having marijuana smokers in public areas where children are present, they are putting them at risk for secondhand smoke and the other health issues it brings along. It is unfair to parents who take their children out either to a store or simply waiting at a bus stop and have to worry about their children inhaling these fumes.

Before finalizing this law, the government should have carefully planned out how they are going to monitor the safety of those who consume the drug as well as every Canadian citizen. In conclusion, I am not stating that smoking marijuana should remain illegal, but the government should take further steps to ensure the safety of all members of the community, furthermore those who chose not to partake in such recreational activities but have to live with fear surrounded by those who do. I also feel that instead of investing time and money into legalizing weed, we could have raised awareness of social issues that have a greater impact on society.

Safe drug use laws, as well as more enforcement of marijuana laws, should be encouraged to reduce the risks of accidents. Lastly further educating drug users on the impacts of marijuana, as well as available resources such as who to go talk to if they feel like they are becoming addicted should be more easily accessible.