

So what about Cannabis in Canada over the past year?

McGill Refresher 2019

By

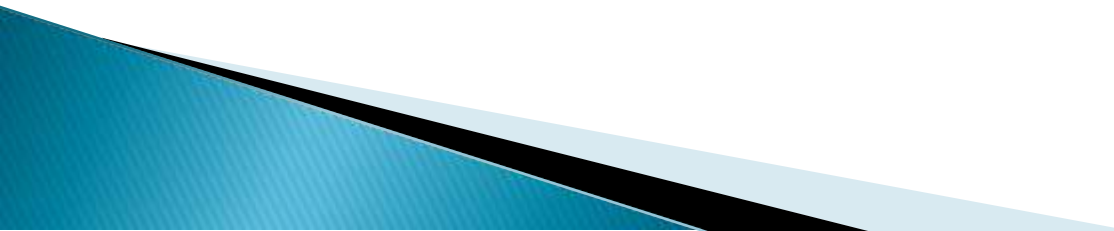
John P. Sader ASAM-certified, ABAM-Diplomate



Full Disclosure

- ▶ Ad-Board:
 - Pfizer for Champix until group disbanded in 2019
 - Indivior for Sublocade – new drug for SUD-opiates
- ▶ Conference speaker:
 - Pfizer
 - Indivior
 - JOICA-Janssen
 - Takeda-Shire

Objectives

- ▶ To understand how Canada's relationship with cannabis has changed over time.
 - ▶ To understand that we can project both positive and negative outcomes for the long term.
 - ▶ To grasp the importance of continuing research in this area in order to tease out the good from the less good, both medically and socially.
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Chain of events leading up to the legalization of cannabis in October 2018

- ▶ 1800's:
 - Hemp was part of the Canadian economy and farmers were encouraged to grow it
- ▶ 1923:
 - Cannabis was added to the Confidential Restricted List under the Narcotics Drug Act Amendment Bill
- ▶ 1932:
 - Law enforcement began seizing marihuana
- ▶ 1960's:
 - The counterculture integrated the use of marihuana and psychedelics into their movement
- ▶ 1970's:
 - Protests began demanding the legalization of marihuana
- ▶ 1997:
 - Public opinion polls reflected that an increasing majority of Canadian adults felt that marihuana possession should not be a crime
- ▶ 2000:
 - Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that cannabis prohibition was unconstitutional. This decision revolved around Terrance Parker was arrested repeatedly for possessing marihuana that he used as an anti-epileptic.
- ▶ 2001:
 - Canada became the first country to legalize marihuana for medical use

More history

- ▶ 2003:
 - Canada introduces the first bill to decriminalize marijuana but pressure from the U.S. DEA pressured against it in 2003 and 2004
- ▶ 2006:
 - PM Stephen Harper introduced a crackdown on growers and dealers with more severe prison sentences
- ▶ 2014:
 - The MMAR was replaced by the MMPR (Marijuana for Medical Purpose Regulations). This removed the requirement for a government license and marijuana could simply be prescribed by a physician.
- ▶ 2015:
 - PM Justin Trudeau runs a campaign with the legalization of recreational marijuana
- ▶ 2016:
 - 7 out of 10 Canadians are found in favour of the legalization of marijuana
- ▶ 2017:
 - Bill C-45 was introduced to parliament. It included wording for 18 years old and older and possession of up to 30 grams. Provisions were included to allow provinces to further restrict possession, sale and use
- ▶ 2018:
 - Bill-45 was approved by the Senate
 - On Oct 15th, the bill went into effect
- ▶ 2019:
 - Oct 17th, the sale of edible forms becomes legal but goes into effect 60 days later

So why the change of approach?


▶ The official line is:

- To protect our underage population from the use of marijuana and its possible effects on the developing brain.
- To displace the illegal market
- To keep profits out of the hands of criminals and organized crime

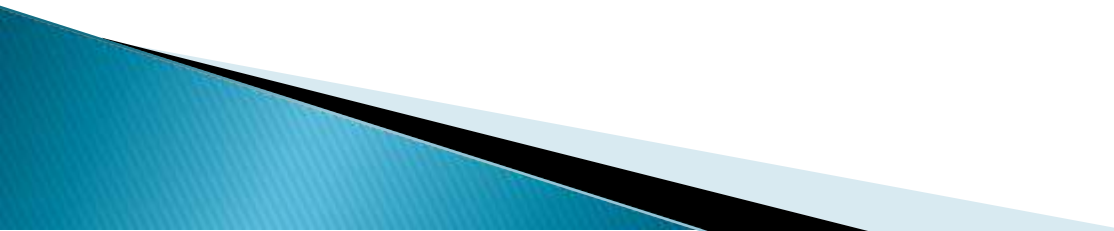
▶ The unsaid:

- Most people who do use cannabis have no problems
- They mostly have no dependency issues and much fewer consequences than those who develop a SUD.

Key differences between legalization in the USA versus legalization in Canada

- ▶ Massive profits have been recorded in California
 - ▶ Cannabis cultivation is now the number one crop in California; bigger than grapes/wine and bigger than almonds
 - ▶ In the first year of legalization (2018), the state expected 1 billion in sales but only achieved 345 million.
 - ▶ This is being blamed on high taxes and the **growing** black market
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California

- ▶ So far none of the tax revenues have been used to begin paying back the general fund money loaned to launch the initiative
 - ▶ None has been reinvested as yet into prevention programs as promised at the outset.
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California consequences

- ▶ Valid statistics are very very difficult to tease out as there are many confounding factors involved:
 - Increased rate of homelessness
 - True BUT is it really attributable to Cannabis legalisation?
 - Increased traffic accidents
 - True but the increases reported in consuming cannabis are approximately 29% versus the 100% increase in drivers in fatal accidents testing positive for cannabis YET AGAIN hard to prove without effective testing for cannabis intoxication

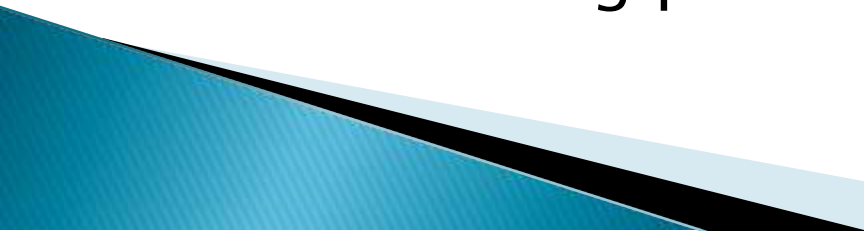
Colorado

- ▶ Unexpected outcomes:
- ▶ 1. For every 1 \$ collected in cannabis tax revenue, 4.5\$ was spent to mitigate the effects on high school drop-out rates and healthcare!
 - Centennial Institute Report, Nov 15 2018
- ▶ 2. 69% of adult users admit to driving under the influence at least once and 27% do so daily!!
- ▶ 3. A study by SAMHSA in the workplace shows that employees using marijuana cause 55% more accidents and are injured 85% more than those who do not.


Across the USA

- ▶ Emergency department admissions relating to marijuana:
 - Account for more admissions than for all other drugs combined
 - Soared from 16 251 in 1991 to 461 028 in 2012
 - SAMHSA 2013, Autry J.H. 1998 and Fairchild C. 2013

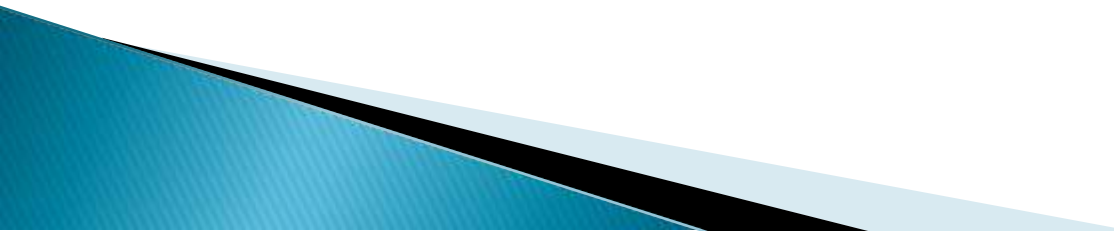
What about Canada over the last year?

- ▶ We have a universal healthcare system that the USA does not.
 - ▶ Here everybody gets the best treatment that we can afford. This is simply not true in the USA where psychiatric patients often end up on the streets with little or no treatment.
 - ▶ The government of Canada has promised that **all** profits made will be reinjected into the healthcare system for drug addiction treatment and into drug prevention.
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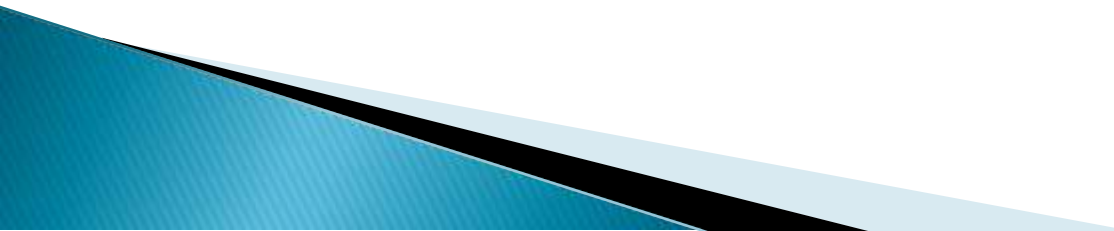
First year growing pains in Canada

- ▶ Supply was not able to keep up with the initial demand.
 - ▶ Stores were closed many days per week.
 - ▶ Prices were not quite competitive with the black market and needed to be readjusted downwards.
 - ▶ Included in Bill C-45 is the possibility for the provinces to make their own rules - in Quebec this has led to the legal age jumping recently from 18 years old to 21 years old. This will be undoubtedly be challenged in court.
 - ▶ Giving or selling or sharing with a person who is under-age legally can lead to a 7 year jail term!
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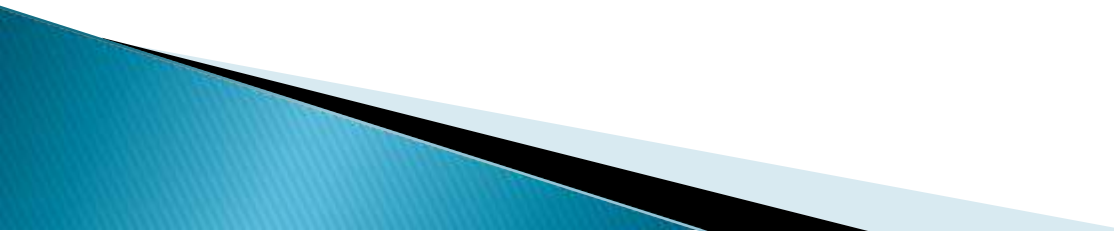
Alberta

- ▶ 18 years and older
 - ▶ Home cultivation for up to 4 plants
 - ▶ It is illegal to smoke in front of children (II tobacco)
 - ▶ Online sale are government only
 - ▶ 65+ stores
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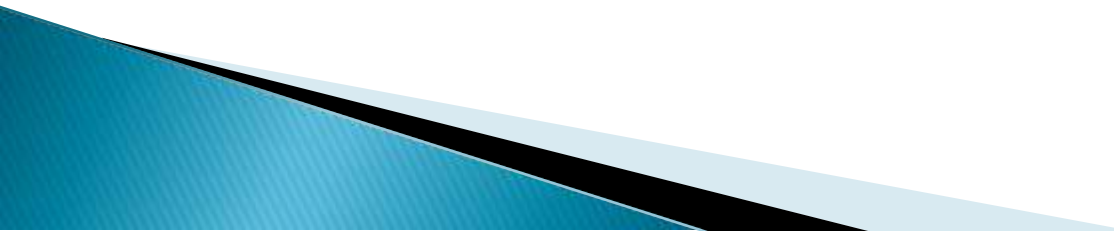
B.C.

- ▶ 19 years and older
 - ▶ No smoking in front of children
 - ▶ Home cultivation away from pedestrian eyes is permitted for up to 4 plants
 - ▶ Online sale are government only
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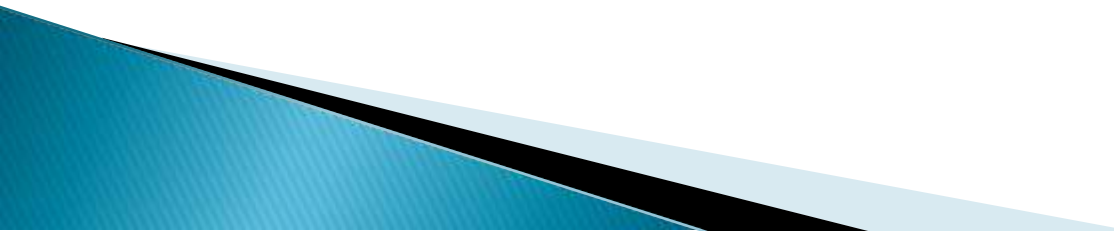
Manitoba

- ▶ 19 years and older
 - ▶ Not allowed to consume in public, nor grow at home
 - ▶ Very few licensed retailers
 - ▶ 'Social Responsibility Fee' tax in 2019
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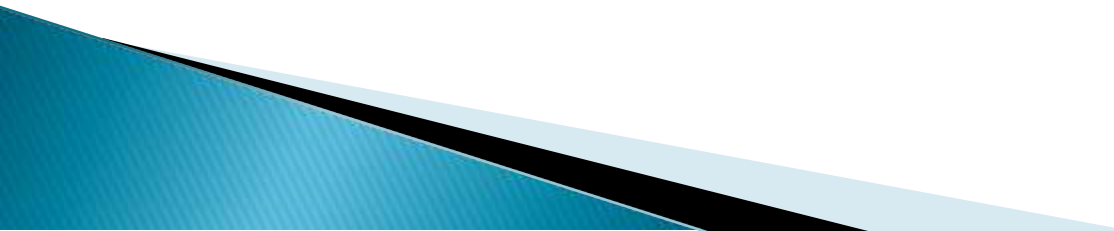
New Brunswick

- ▶ 19 years and older
 - ▶ Permitted in a private residence only and home cultivation of 4 plants which need to be locked and secured
 - ▶ Plans are for not more than 20 government retailers
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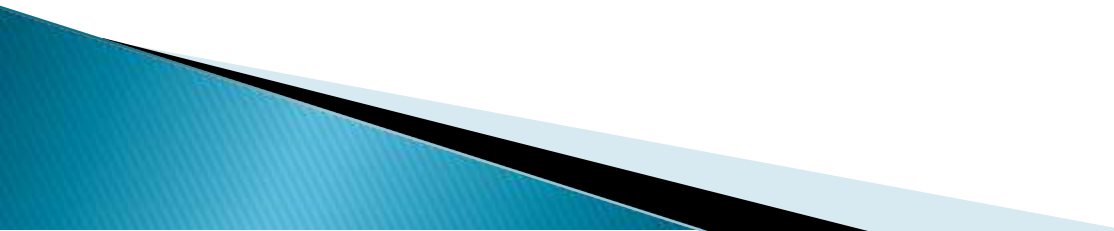
Ontario

- ▶ 19 years and older.
 - ▶ Like BC, Ontario treats cannabis much like tobacco
 - ▶ Use in public is not permitted especially if there may be children present
 - ▶ Private retailers are permitted
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Quebec

- ▶ New law means 21 years and older more recreational marijuana beginning on January 1st 2020.
 - ▶ This same law further restricts edible forms in Quebec (nothing sugary and appealing to children will be allowed)
 - ▶ No smoking in educational buildings
 - ▶ No allowances for growing at home – this is in front of the courts as the Quebec government is appealing against a ruling made by a Quebec judge that not allowing home-growing contravenes federal rights given to Canadians.
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Other stats worth noting

- ▶ Over the past four years, cocaine use is clearly on the rise!
 - ▶ The same goes for intravenous drug use.
 - ▶ Over the past 4 years the legalization of recreational cannabis has been in the works
 - ▶ The Canadian government is essentially trying to take over the share of the black market
 - ▶ The black market doesn't appear to want to come quietly!
 - ▶ They have a distribution system in place – why not distribute something else?!
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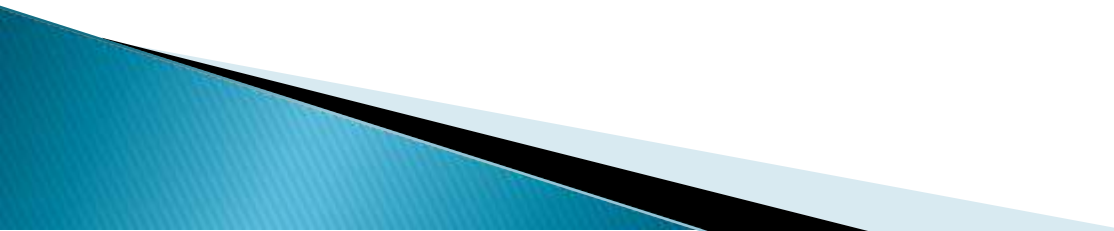
So maybe the 'Taking away marketshare from organized crime' may be backfiring!

- ▶ It could be argued that this plays right into the hands of organized crime.
- ▶ Cannabis remains a market with much smaller margins than cocaine, speed and heroin
- ▶ Drug use is a way of approaching life:
 - Stressed? Have a puff!
 - Tired? Have a puff!
 - Eventually Have a line!
- ▶ Tolerance eventually sets in and the SUD people seek out more stimulation thus:
 - Expect to see cannabis laced with hallucinogens/ stimulants
 - More cocaine
 - More speed
 - More heroin
 - More IV use

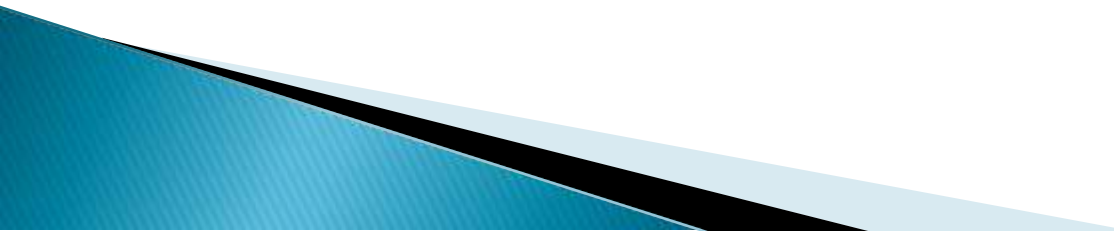
But then again, what about our consumer economy?

- ▶ Consumerism IS our economic model
 - ▶ Different estimates suggest that up to 70% of the strength of the USA economy is driven by consumerism
 - ▶ Indirectly encouraging drug use may actually be making more good little consumers who actually help to continue to drive the economy as it stands.
 - ▶ Sounds a lot like Brave New World!
 - ▶ Canadians may be a little worse at consumerism as household spending only accounts for 56% of GDP.
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Rich Man Poor Man

- ▶ The legal gambling industry has shown the way:
 - Provincial gambling gains create more material wealth that we then redirect to treat those made emotionally/spiritually poor by the gambling system
 - More money circulating within the system so in theory the economy is healthier
 - However, what ever happened to ‘An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure’?
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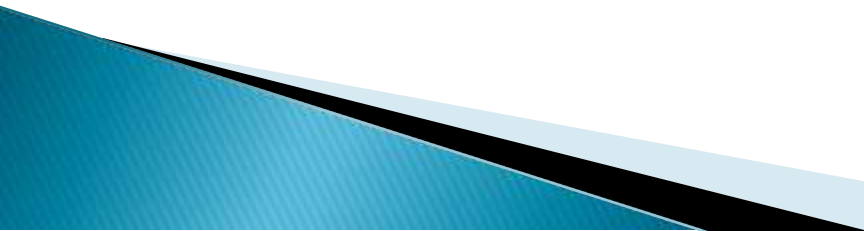
Fair?

- ▶ If we consider that some people are much more genetically vulnerable to the effects of substances and behaviours then 'mining' their collective Achilles' heels boils down to a form of cannibalism where those at little risk feed off those at greater risk.
 - ▶ Just how comfortable are we with such a system?
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What about our American neighbours?

- ▶ The American DEA has seized more than 33 times more cannabis in New York State in 2019 than in 2018
 - ▶ The DEA believes that the Canadian black market has redirected its cannabis to the USA
 - ▶ The bad news is that cannabis profits are often reinvested in cocaine and heroin importation because of the bigger profit margins
 - ▶ American border guards have increased cannabis seizures by 5 times over the past year – Americans bringing back Quebec cannabis.
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What about studies in Canada since 2019

- ▶ Much is being studied but few results are in
 - ▶ Some reports about the increasing number of case of Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome in emergency rooms (CHS)
 - ▶ 20% of the 5.4 million Canadian cannabis users consume 67% of all cannabis sold. These were mostly found in the 15–34 years old group and were mostly male. (Statscan 2018)
 - ▶ These stats are similar to those showing that 50% of all alcohol in the USA is consumed by 10% of the population.
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So where to now M. Savage?

- ▶ The good things that can come out of this social experiment:
 - Research will be easier to conduct and more valid
 - The value of Cannabis as a healthcare tool will be easier to access.
 - More SUD's will probably mean more patients recovering and ultimately more deciding to become therapists themselves
 - Maybe this is what it will take for society to finally better understand what SUD's are all about!
 - Maybe going with the flow with the populations perceptions will lead us to hit bottom faster than if we counterbalance and allow society to Segway it's way to deeper and deeper depths

The less good...

- ▶ Pandora's box was all golden and appeared just perfect
- ▶ There will be casualties, some grave and others not so much so
- ▶ Society will become even more split between those who overly appreciate substances and those who don't
- ▶ Once open, even if the research tells us that we should endeavor to now close the box, it will take a lot more effort and may in fact prove impossible.

▶ John P. Sader MD, certified ASAM, ABAM-Diplomate 2019