

# Position Statement: Youth Incarceration for Cannabis Offences

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) believes that the criminal penalties for cannabis possession should not pose a greater threat to the individual than the potential harms caused by using cannabis. We strongly feel that no youth should be criminalized for the possession of cannabis. We are especially concerned that members of racialized and/or disenfranchised communities will be disproportionately affected by uneven enforcement of punitive consequences for possession. Restorative approaches such as diversion programs (e.g., connection to social services) should be prioritized over punitive action.

# Position Statement: Criminal Records for Cannabis Possession

Approximately 500,000 Canadians have a criminal record for cannabis possession, and this burden is disproportionately carried by members of black and Indigenous communities. On October 17th (legalization day), the federal government announced plans to implement a system to assist with pardoning individuals who have been previously convicted of cannabis possession of 30 grams (the current legal amount). The legislation has yet to be introduced, but it will waive fees and waiting periods for individuals seeking a pardon.

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) has advocated for cannabis amnesty and applauds the government's efforts to undo the harms caused by prohibition to members of our marginalized communities. However, we believe that the government can and should do more to support individuals who have suffered under prohibition. CSSDP supports calls for a sweeping expungement of criminal records rather than leaving the onus on individuals to apply for a pardon. In addition, we believe that equity programs should be established to support those individuals who were criminalized for non-violent cannabis-related offences in joining the legal cannabis industry. For more information, please read this article by UBC MA student, CSSDP UBC Member, and Director of Research and Policy for the BC Federation of Labour Chuka Ejeckam:

<https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/clearing-pot-charges-from-canadians-records-would-be-a-good-start-but-its-not-enough/>

# Position Statement: Campus Cannabis Policies

Most cannabis policies on Canadian campuses are highly restrictive, and do not reflect the needs of the entire student community. Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) supports policy reform that provides medical cannabis users with a designated consumption space on campus, in order to ensure their dignity, privacy, and safety. CSSDP also supports policies that allow designated on-campus cannabis consumption spaces so as to not unintentionally incentivize the use of higher risk substances such as tobacco and alcohol. Designated spaces also respect the rights of members of the campus community who do not wish to be exposed to cannabis

## Position Statement: Youth Access to Supervised Consumption

Young people use substances at rates higher than the Canadian adult population, however, young people are often age-restricted from supervised consumption sites. Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) supports youth specific spaces for supervised consumption in order to most effectively serve the needs of young people. Our position is consistent with a recent government report (Charlesworth, 2018), in calling for a full spectrum of youth-specific harm reduction services which includes SCS. See the *Time to Listen* report for more: <https://rcybc.ca/timetolisten>

# Position Statement: Cannabis Taxation

Non-medical cannabis should be taxed at both the Federal and Provincial levels, in addition to the application of an excise tax. The collection of these taxes allows for streams of revenue to be generated and redistributed in key areas of need around cannabis including research and education. Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP).

Medical cannabis should not be taxed at either jurisdictional level (Federal or Provincial), or through the application of an excise tax. In practice, the excise tax is applied to luxury goods, in particular goods that may generate additional costs to society, for example alcohol and cigarettes. In principle, the excise tax, also colloquially termed the “sin tax,” signals a lack of recognition of the legitimacy of medical cannabis and patients who use cannabis for recognized medical purposes. Additionally, while cannabis is currently subject to a provincial sales tax in certain provinces (e.g., Quebec, British Columbia), no other medication is taxable in such a manner. CSSDP supports a shift to making medical cannabis zero-rated (that is, not taxable through a sales tax) and exempt from the excise tax.

# Position Statement: Drug Regulation

It is the position of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) that the use of drugs should be wholly encompassed under the realm of public health rather than the criminal justice system. As such, CSSDP supports the decriminalization, legalization, and regulation of all drugs. Criminalization of drug use can exacerbate health and social harms by negatively impacting access to employment, housing, and the healthcare system. Furthermore, the criminalization of drug use contributes to the stigmatization of people who use drugs, which is one of the largest barriers to seeking treatment and other support.

At the pinnacle of this issue is the rising death-toll of accidental drug overdoses in Canada, of which two primary drivers are the unregulated contaminated drug supply and stigma preventing safe use and access to help. Legalization promotes safe access to a regulated drug supply, and prevents accidental deaths due to contamination. Separating drug use from the judicial system is a step towards reducing stigma thus reducing barriers to accessing help.