



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02011**

BY: **MR. GODIN (PORTNEUF-JACQUES-CARTIER)**

DATE: **January 31, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **HONOURABLE JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD**

Response by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

CANNABIS

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

This Petition calls on the House of Commons to reject Bill C-45.

The Government of Canada introduced Bill C-45 (the proposed Cannabis Act) to legalize, strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis, to keep it out of the hands of children and to keep profits out of the hands of criminals. The proposed Cannabis Act would create a strict framework for controlling the production, distribution, sale, import, export and possession of cannabis in Canada.

In addition to legalizing and strictly regulating cannabis, the Government is toughening laws around alcohol- and drug-impaired driving, with Bill C-46 (impaired driving). Under the Government's proposed legislation, new offences would be added to the *Criminal Code* to enforce a zero tolerance approach for those driving under the influence of cannabis and other drugs. Additionally, the proposed legislation would authorize new tools for police to better detect drivers who have drugs in their body.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a top priority for the Government of Canada. The current approach to cannabis is not working. The evidence is clear that existing criminal prohibitions have not resulted in low rates of

cannabis use among Canadian youth. In fact, Canadian youth use cannabis more than tobacco – a legal, yet highly regulated product. Canadian youth and young adults also use cannabis at rates that are among the highest in the world. Further, the current approach has allowed criminals and organized crime to profit.

The proposed Cannabis Act contains various provisions that will support the health and safety of Canadians, including the following:

- a prohibition against providing or selling cannabis to youth;
- the creation of a new offence of using a minor to commit an offence relating to the distribution, sale, import, export, or production of cannabis;
- prohibiting the selling, packaging, and labelling of cannabis products that are considered appealing to youth;
- establishing many of the same advertising restrictions that exist for tobacco products, which would prevent youth from being persuaded to use cannabis products;
- prohibiting the sale of cannabis through a self-service display or vending machine;
- allowing the making of regulations that would require such things as childproof packaging and a universal THC symbol; and
- provinces and territories would be able to set a higher minimum age as they deem appropriate for regulating adult consumption, for example, in order to align it with their drinking age.

Following Royal Assent, the proposed legislation would allow adults to legally possess 30 grams of cannabis in public. This would mean that possession of small amounts of cannabis would no longer be a criminal offence. The proposed legislation would also exempt from criminal charges adults who grow up to four cannabis plants for personal use and per residence. Provincial, territorial and municipal governments would be allowed to set further restrictions beyond what is outlined in the proposed legislation. Not criminalizing this conduct is in keeping with Bill C-45's stated purposes which include allowing for the licit production of cannabis to reduce illicit cannabis-related activities and reducing the burden on the criminal justice system.

The Government of Canada is undertaking a broad public education campaign to inform Canadians of all ages about the new proposed legislation, including the penalties for providing cannabis to youth, and the risks involved with consuming cannabis. This public education campaign will be focused on helping young Canadians make the best possible choices about their future and will help them to understand the risks and consequences of, for example, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The Government has announced an investment of \$46 million over five years in public education, awareness and surveillance activities, to inform Canadians, particularly young people, of the risks of cannabis use, as well as surveillance activities. This public education and awareness campaign has already begun, and will be a continuing priority.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research launched a targeted Catalyst Grant to serve as an initial step to support "made in Canada" studies on the health and social impacts of cannabis legalization and regulation. The results of this funding competition were recently announced – the grants will provide \$1.4M to 14 research projects across the country to assess the impacts of legalizing and regulating cannabis in Canada.

In support of Bill C-46 (impaired driving), \$161 million is dedicated to build law enforcement training capacity across Canada, train frontline officers in how to detect the signs and symptoms of drug-impaired driving, provide access to drug screening devices, develop policy, bolster research, and raise public awareness about the dangers of drug-impaired driving.