

OH CANNABIS. OUR GOVERNMENTS JUST CAN'T GET IT RIGHT

There's a compelling case to be made that ordinary Canadians have handled the historic legalization of cannabis far better than either the Ontario or federal governments.

Cheers to the people and a summer raspberry to the politicians.

Consider that in the nine months since the prohibition of recreational pot ended, drug-impaired driving did not spike as many feared, while Statistics Canada says the number of Canadians who reported buying black market cannabis plunged by 13 per cent.

And we've witnessed this even as the number of Canadians who reported trying cannabis nearly doubled - to 646,000 people in the first three months of 2019, up from 327,000 in the same period in 2018.

In sharp contrast, however, senior levels of government have not lived up to their part of the bargain to make legalization work smoothly.

Despite its denials, Ottawa has failed to ensure the supply of legal weed comes close to meeting consumer demand. As for the Ontario government, it's botched the roll-out of retail stores.

Both shortcomings explain why 38 per cent of Canadians who buy pot continue to turn to the still-thriving black market. And wasn't the eradication of that criminal market one of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's main reasons for legalization in the first place?

To be fair, Queen's Park announced last week it will license 50 new cannabis retail stores starting in October, which will give people more legal options for buying pot. That's a step in the right direction.

And to cut both the Ontario and federal governments a little slack, the end of prohibition was a big, complicated, multi-faceted deal. Canada is a global pioneer in legalizing this drug nationwide. Whoever blazes a new trail is bound to stumble into a few holes.

But considering the federal Liberals won the 2015 general election with the promise to legalize pot, they should be criticized for the problems persisting nearly four years later.

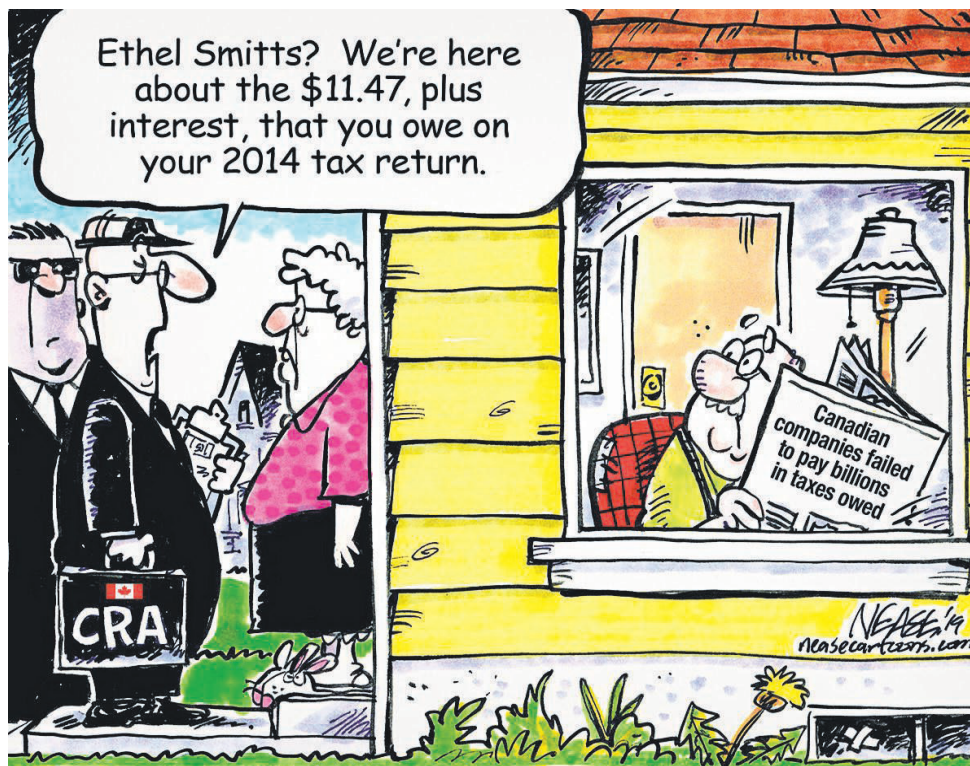
The supply problem has been linked, in part, to the tough regulations imposed by the federal department, Health Canada, on the 132 legal Canadian producers. To be sure, it's essential that the safety of legal cannabis is beyond reproach. Even so, many producers are complaining Health Canada drags its feet in approving new licences. Hence the supply headaches that will likely continue for years. Hence the healthy black market that services underage teens while denying the federal and provincial governments tax revenue they're owed.

For their part, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives are more than happy to blame the lack of supply for the paucity of legal retail outlets in the province. They argue they can't open the floodgates to consumers by hastily opening more retail outlets as long as the supply shortages continue.

Yes, that makes sense. What doesn't make sense is that some of the first 25 of the province's legal pot shops that were supposed to open on April 1 still aren't up and running.

The public deserves a reliable, accessible legal source for a drug the federal government says is perfectly legal. Satisfying that demand must be a greater priority for both Ford and Trudeau.

TO LEARN HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR OWN CONTENT VISIT THEIFP.CA



ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN STILL ALL TOO COMMON

STATISTICS ARE SHOCKING TO MANY, WRITES BOZZO



CARM BOZZO
Column

One in four women in Canada will face abuse in their lifetime.

That's a true statistic. Often, when I make presentations to the community or talk one on one with new donors, I share this information - surprising and shocking many.

Let's visualize what that statistic looks like - in a Grade 1 class with 16 girls in the class, that means four of those young girls will one day face abuse in one form or another. In an office of 50 people, 20 being women, five of those 20 will have been abused or will cur-

rently be facing abuse.

What does that look like in your child's classroom? On their sports teams? Music classes? What does that look like in your office? Your company? Your church or place of worship? Your friendship circle? Your family?

Many times people will tell me that they don't know anyone who has been abused. I say the same thing I have been saying for almost 15 years ... you know her - you just don't know her story.

With statistics that high, we all know someone.

In 2018, in our own community, Halton Regional Police Services (HRPS) responded to 3320 intimate partner domestic calls for service, resulting in 733 arrests and 1,451 criminal charges.

You know someone.

In the first quarter of 2019, HRPS responded to

748 intimate partner domestic calls, resulting in 177 arrests and 369 charges.

You know someone.

Our shelters, both in Milton and Burlington, operate at capacity or close to capacity for most of the year.

You know someone.

Abuse happens in all communities, including ours.

And if you are that someone, please reach out to us for help. Call our crisis lines any time of day or night - 905-332-7892 or 905-878-8555. Our phone lines are open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

If you need more information on how you can help Halton Women's Place visit www.halton-womensplace.com.

Carm Bozzo is the development manager of Halton Women's Place.

YOUR OPINIONS

SIGN UP FOR OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER AT THEIFP.CA

ABOUT US

This newspaper, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 80 community publications across Ontario.

This newspaper is a member of the National NewsMedia Council. Complainants are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of the newspaper and, if not satisfied, write The National NewsMedia Council, Suite 200, 890 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2H2. Phone: 416-340-1981 Web: www.mediacouncil.ca

nnc
National NewsMedia Council

ocna

newsroom@theifp.ca
IndependentAndFreePress
@IFP_11

WHO WE ARE

Publisher
Kelly Montague
Regional General Manager
Steve Foreman
Regional Director of Media
Holly Chris
Regional Managing Editor
Catherine O'Hara
Managing Editor
Karen Miceli
Distribution Representative
Iouliana Polar
Real Estate
Kristie Pells
Regional Production Manager
Manuel Garcia
Production
Shelli Harrison
Halton Media General Manager
Vicki Dillane

CONTACT US

The Independent & Free Press
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1
Phone: 905-873-0301
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480
Fax: 905-873-0398

Letters to the editor

All letters must be fewer than 200 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters.

Delivery

For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail lpolar@mitoncanadianchampion.com or call 905-234-1019.

Accredité
FDSA
Accredited