

Coming to a store near you!

Written by Sheralyn Roman

It's time to come clean, make a confession and reveal to you my deepest, darkest secret. In the words of Bill Clinton, "I never inhaled." Whether I did or didn't it now looks like if I want to, I'll have my chance. I can simply click a few buttons on my computer and have something "discreetly" mailed to my home or, by April 2019, walk or drive to my local cannabis retailer to purchase a stash anytime I want. All of this is now perfectly legal (is it still called a "stash" if you don't have to "stash" it away somewhere?). What's your position on the legal sale of pot coming soon to a store near you? Stores that are near homes, schools, places of worship or locations in the community where you shop, dine or work?

I am known, both personally and professionally, as a person of balance. Someone who is able to see both sides of an issue, listen objectively to arguments and for trying to forge a path gracefully down the middle road "keeping most people happy." My friends know me as the objective listener and I've been listening intently to the ongoing debate regarding the sale of this now legal substance in our community. Objectively, it is no less "harmful" than the sale of liquor is at the LCBO. Liquor is an addictive substance for some, it's a problem when a person drinks and drives and liquor is the subject of attempts by underage minors everywhere to obtain it under false pretenses. All of which will also apply to the sale of pot except in the case of marijuana, perhaps without the same strict controls under which the LCBO now operates. Who controls who has access to cannabis and who polices the people controlling the access? Until we have more clarity, it's hard to be objective and I find myself leaning heavily on the side of "NIMBYism." That is to say, not in my backyard thank you very much.

If I understand the nuances of pot sales (notice everyone is referring to it as cannabis now, sanitizing the name for public consumption) those who require its use for medicinal purposes are able to obtain it relatively easily or at the very least, with no more difficulty than you or I would have attempting to fill a prescription and being required to drive to our local pharmacy to pick it up. With the government looking to license retailers across the province, it seems far more likely the only people for whom there might be some benefit are the "casual" users who no longer have to rely on a "friend of a friend" to hook them up or young adults who might now find themselves in a better position to access the drug easily. Of course the theory is this weed will be safer, not tampered with and perhaps there's an advantage to avoiding back-alley deals but I wonder; are we now going to see parents wandering the aisles of the grocery store, price-matching varieties of pot or filling tanks with gas then running in for a double-double and a gram? Are drive thru's that far behind? You think I exaggerate? Who thought Donald Trump would ever become President?

I foresee scenarios where people might loiter in the general vicinity of cannabis outlets, where after hours activities might be higher and where unscrupulous retailers will disregard the rules in the interest of sales. I predict trouble too. Did you know that in Toronto, just this past October 2nd, a security guard was shot dead at an illegal dispensary? Think that won't happen just because pot is legal now? Is this something we want taking place potentially near our schools? Unless you plan to take your computer across the border into the US and are worried about what a border guard's search of your Internet history might reveal (in which case I'm in trouble just based on research for this article) I think it's just as easy to order your supply online and have it mailed to your home. (Who protects Canada Post workers is another whole topic for discussion?.)

While I am no fan of excessive government interference or launching study after study, the fact remains not enough research has gone into this decision, or for that matter, into the long term, potentially harmful side effects of extended marijuana use. The government has, in my opinion, offloaded responsibility for a heavily loaded issue onto the backs of small towns and regional municipalities "asking local Town councils to make the big decisions it has refused to make. That's an unfair burden to place on local representatives "not because they aren't capable "we have some excellent people in office "but because this issue is bigger than any one town, city or region. If Caledon votes no, are we pushing potential problems to the south or north of us? If Brampton votes no and we vote yes, we don't want the increase in traffic or potential fallout of problematic pot stores either. Who pays for the extra policing? How do we address the very real concern of driving stoned? Highway #0 is already a nightmare, can you imagine it "high"?