

Ontario falls behind on pot sales

EDITORIAL

A majority of recreational cannabis consumers won't purchase their product from Ontario's government for many years.

Statistics Canada reports that since legalization of cannabis, the numbers of consumers did not seem to have changed much. Data from the agency states 4.6 million people, or 15 per cent of Canadians over 15-years-old reported using cannabis in the last three months.

Nearly half of Canadians who reported using cannabis said they did so, for non-medical reason, while one-quarter said they used it for medicinal purposes.

The survey also found that recreational consumers were less likely to buy their cannabis legally, with only 26 per cent of them saying they bought it from authorized retailers or online producers.

Further, about 42 per cent of recreational users said they bought cannabis illegally through drug dealers, compassion clubs, unlicensed dispensaries or storefronts and unlicensed websites.

The federal governments said the legalization of pot will push out the illicit drug trade and maintain public safety. That won't be the case for a while.

A major hinderance deterring consumers is the price. If you browse the Ontario Cannabis Store website, the cheapest gram of dried flower goes for \$7.50, for low quality product, and go up to \$13.25 for high quality product and with more tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) ? the psychoactive component of cannabis that makes you high. The cheapest half-gram pre-roll joint is \$10.35. The most you can order online at one time is 30 grams. This is in line with the most amount of weed you can carry under federal law.

Statistics Canada reported that the average price of a gram on the black market is \$6.51.

Another hurdle is distribution. Purchasers are expected to wait one to three days for their product to be delivered, at this time. If you're a beer connoisseur or wine drinker, can you imagine waiting one to three days for your alcohol to arrive to your house? Whether you want beer, cannabis or wine, you want it now. Beer has become extremely accessible in the past few years. You don't have to drive far to go to your local LCBO or Beer Store. Alcohol is even sold at your local grocery stores with types of beer in stock.

This did not happen overnight. Beer took a while to skyrocket to the empire it is today when it was first legalized.

Governments at all levels have worked on closing down cannabis shops. After legalization of cannabis this past October, Toronto police officers shut down five pot shops in a co-ordinated raid, according to the Toronto Star.

Toronto police officers continued their crusade shutting down 11 dispensaries the week after, according to the Globe and Mail.

Those same governments, under different leadership of course, went on a mission to eliminated 'intoxicating' beverages leading to the closure of nearly three quarters of brewers between 1978 to 1928.

It took a while for brewers to comply with government protocol. In the hay day beer was a taboo topic with many glamorizing over moonshine. Now, beer can be sold virtually everywhere and producers have to comply with certain levels of alcohol content and dilute it among many other things, for their product to be sold in LCBO or Beer Stores nationwide.

The same will happen with cannabis. Cannabis sellers have to have designated marked labels on their product ? with risks and warnings like cigarettes - comply with the proper THC content and ensure their products are safe for public consumption. This will take some time for the government cannabis to flourish.