

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Liberal government?s marijuana legislation is too hasty

The current Liberal government released the details on the taxation of marijuana Nov. 10.

Their taxation plan would add an excise tax of \$1 per gram or 10 per cent of the final retail price, whichever is higher, with the revenues to be divided equally between Ottawa and the provinces. GST will also be applied to sales and the current government is committed to consulting on the plan until Dec. 7. While the current Liberal government has shared its plan to tax marijuana, there are still many unanswered questions surrounding the quick legalization of it, which raises many understandable concerns for Canadians.

We, the Conservative Official Opposition, oppose the legislation to legalize marijuana in Canada.

Since the current Liberal government announced its plan to legalize marijuana, we've raised and expressed very serious concerns, ranging from the current proliferation of illegal, unregulated marijuana dispensaries; the public safety issue of people driving and operating heavy equipment while high; ensuring that marijuana is going to be kept out of the hands of children; addressing Canada's international obligations regarding the legality of marijuana; to name a few.

Instead of focusing on how many tax dollars he can squeeze out of his policy, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau needs to stop and listen instead to scientists, doctors and law enforcement officials; all of whom say this plan is being rushed through without proper planning or consideration for the negative consequences of such complicated legislation. Most concerning is that Prime Minister Trudeau's bill does not keep marijuana out of the hands of children, eliminate organized crime or address issues with impaired driving. The result of the Prime Minister's mismanagement is that provinces and municipalities will be forced to pay the massive upfront costs of implementing this ill-conceived plan.

In addition to the concerns we've raised as the Official Opposition, other groups have raised concerns with respect to the current Liberal government's plan to legalize marijuana.

Dr. Laurent Marcoux from the Canadian Medical Association stated, "We still want to set the age at 21, and maybe 25, because the damage done to the brain will be permanent," at the Standing Committee on Health, Sept. 11, 2017. OPP Deputy Commissioner Rick Barnum stated during his Health Committee testimony, "if legislation is ready to go in July 2018, policing will not be ready to go August 1; it's impossible. The damage that can be done between the time of new legislation and police officers being ready to enforce the law in six months or a year make it very hard for us to ever regain that foothold."

However, the Liberals have now used their majority to pass the bill in the House of Commons and send it to the Senate over Conservative objections and despite concerns raised by other groups.

The current Liberal government has chosen to focus their efforts on the amount of tax revenue that can be generated through the taxation of marijuana instead of addressing the very serious and (very real) concerns their problematic and complex legislation raises. It is yet another example of the current government failing Canadians and acting impulsively for political points.

Canadians deserve better from their government.

