

# The Prohibition of Marijuana

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## Abstract

Canadian society's view on marijuana is changing, while the government persistently asserts that it should remain illegal. Issue salience regarding the legalization of marijuana is high and recent public opinion polls show overwhelming support for a policy change (Hathaway, Erickson, and Lucas 2007, 45). This paper discusses how marijuana was outlawed under a false problem definition in 1923 and its continuing prohibition to this day. Four current issues affect the determination of marijuana's prohibition: social problems, health problems, marijuana as a gateway drug, and American pressures on Canadian policy. These factors impact the problem definition of marijuana use and suggest an impending policy change that reflects Canadian society's view on this drug, based on contemporary indicators and focus events.

*Keywords:* Canadian marijuana policy, public policy cycle, problem definition

## Introduction

As Canada passes the 90th anniversary of prohibition of marijuana, a shift in the values of how society views marijuana is evident. Despite being illegal, marijuana usage has not subsided, which to some indicates a need to rethink Canadian policy on its prohibition (Fischer, Rehm, and Hall 2009, 101). Michael Orsini (2007) writes about a responsibility paradigm in which individual choice plays a large role in the lives of Canadians. While he writes specifically about the health care system, this paradigm can play a role in the Canadian illegal drug policy as well. For much of the last 25 years, Canada has operated on a harm reduction model for marijuana, a model that supports the responsabilization of individuals. It focuses on decreasing the health, social, and economic consequences of drug use while promoting abstinence, but not requiring it (Grant 2009, 661). The recent passage of Bill C-10<sup>1</sup> by the current government

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1. Bill C-10, the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*, was an omnibus bill passed on 12 March 2012 that invokes a mandatory minimum sentence of six months imprisonment for the production of more than five marijuana plants if the intent of production is for trafficking. See *Statutes of Canada 2012*, sec. 41b. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=5465759&File=4>.

shows a reversal from this harm reduction model to harsher penalties for marijuana possession and cultivation (Hyshka et al. 2012, 126). This move is in the opposite direction of other countries' policies and is probably temporary. Stuart Soroka (2007) argues that policy changes occur when issue salience is high. If this is true, then Canada should expect to see a policy change regarding the criminality of marijuana in the near future.

This essay will argue that Canada's policy regarding the prohibition of marijuana operates on an outdated problem definition. The first part of this paper will explain agenda-setting and problem definition. Secondly, a brief history of Canada's policy on marijuana will reveal the original problem definition, and how policy was unable to change in the last 90 years due to the lack of salience. Thirdly, a discussion about the current issues that inform the problem definition of marijuana – social problems, health problems, marijuana as a gateway drug, and American pressures on Canadian policy – will outline the changing nature of the problem. Finally, these changing perspectives will explain why a policy change is imminent and necessary using Soroka's problem recognition via the use of *indicators* and *focus events*. The purpose of this essay is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the complex issues surrounding marijuana legislation, nor to offer an opinion about marijuana's use. An informed, responsible citizen can decide for him or herself whether using marijuana is acceptable.

### **Framework: Agenda-Setting and Problem Definition**

Problem definition is a formal part of the public policy cycle that indicates the existence of a problem and some of the factors that lead to its existence (Pal 2010). A properly defined problem allows a policy maker to choose the most effective method of policy implementation. In a complex society, there are complex problems that require much attention and forethought. As a result, governments inevitably face more problems than they have time to deal with. Indeed, attention is a finite resource. Soroka (2007) suggests that agenda-setting "is the study of issue salience" (185). Issue salience is the relative importance of an issue on a policy maker's agenda. Specifically, he discusses the rise and fall of salience and the effect it has on policy makers. He would like us to think of issue salience in two ways: first, as a cycle, with many periods of increased salience followed by a decline in public interest (186); and second, as a heart monitor – long periods of stability with sudden bursts of salience. Soroka describes this as punctuated equilibrium. The national mood is a form of salience that describes a time at which a large percentage of society is thinking along common lines. This mood, along with the brief moments of salience, help create political streams. These streams lead to the opening of *policy windows* – moments during which issues receive the attention of policy makers – when policy change is most likely to occur (187).

Deborah Stone (2012) says that problem definitions are like stories. They have a beginning, middle, and end which involves a change or transformation (159). Within these stories there are many ways to define problems. She identifies five different modes that act as a

language to explain how “we know there is a disparity between social goals and the current state of affairs” (14). Symbols and numbers are verbal and numerical languages that help define problems by telling a story. She also encourages us to think of a definition of a problem in terms of what causes them, who is interested in them, and what kind of decision is appropriate (14).

Policy making is about solving problems, but in order to solve a problem recognition is necessary. Recognition of a problem requires the observation of indicators and focus events. Leslie Pal (2010) relates indicators to “routine monitoring that turns up discrepancies or patterns that hint that something is amiss” (101). They are events that are noticed, but do not necessarily command immediate response. Examples of such events are statistics on highway deaths, or the concentration of diseases in a particular geographical area. Larger, focusing events portray an impending response. Pal provides two examples of focus events, one made it through the policy window and became implemented, and the other decreased in salience and faded away (102-04). The SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak in 2003 attracted immediate worldwide attention, and the tasering of a Polish immigrant thrust the use of tasers by police into the limelight. While the SARS outbreak caused an immediate government response, the tasering issue decreased in salience and ultimately disappeared. Now and then this issue “blips” when incidences happen and discussions are held, but then it disappears again. This is an example of punctuated equilibrium (112). The next section will show how both issue salience and storytelling works to define the problem of the Canadian policy on marijuana.

## **History**

The public policy story regarding marijuana began in 1923, in a time when most people were not aware of what marijuana was. Marijuana use was first defined as a problem when Emily Murphy, a Police Magistrate and Judge of the Juvenile Court in Edmonton, brought the issue to the forefront. She wrote a series of articles regarding a drug problem for Maclean’s magazine and later published a book called *The Black Candle* that linked immigration to this drug problem (Mosher 1999). She commented that users of marijuana would “become raving maniacs and are liable to kill or indulge in any form of violence to other persons” (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 467). This increased the issue salience by using strong language that explained who was interested in the problem (society), what caused the problem (marijuana) and recommended a decision as to its solution (prohibition). This worked to elevate marijuana to a social problem. As marijuana was largely unknown, this went largely unchallenged (468).

However, contemporary literature suggested that marijuana was not as dangerous as Judge Murphy explained. As early as 1894, the *Journal of Mental Science* explained that moderate use of the drug was not harmful, and in fact proved beneficial in certain circumstances. There were no links between marijuana usage and the inclination to commit violent acts. The strong language and effective story-telling by Judge Murphy was enough to sway the House of Commons to add marijuana to the list of prohibited substances in Canada by unanimous vote in

the House of Commons without providing any proof of harm (Mosher 1999). Marijuana then became an illegal substance under the same category of harder drugs such as cocaine and heroin, despite lack of scientific, health, or criminal correlations to suggest such categorization.

In line with Soroka's (2007) theory of issue salience, a long period of stability took place between the between 1930 and 1960. During this period, there was little change to Canadian drug legislation regarding marijuana. Although there were short bursts of salience, they were not enough to invoke major policy change. Clayton Mosher (1999) speaks of a "cannabis confusion" that took place between 1930 and 1946. Only 25 convictions for marijuana offences nationwide suggested that it did not pose a serious social problem. As a result, the Minister of National Health and Pensions indicated that marijuana would be allowable for legal use in Canada. However, as marijuana's prohibition was already underway the possibility of its legalization was not likely and did not occur because salience on this issue was low during this time. Policy makers were preoccupied with more important issues such as the Great Depression and World War II (Mosher 1999).

The 1970s saw an increase in recreational use of marijuana among young people, a subject on which the government issued an inquiry. The Le Dain Commission proposed that all criminal penalties associated with marijuana be removed, but was immediately rejected by the government of the day. There was no reason given, and for the next 30 years, systematic rejection of all recommendations by subsequent governments to ease penalties created a stalemate on the issue of marijuana legalization (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 468).

In 1987, Canada moved toward a harm reduction model approach to drug usage. A harm reduction model attempts to balance public order and public health using four supporting pillars: prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction (Grant 2009, 661). This model views drug use, specifically marijuana use, as an unpleasant fact in society and seeks to reduce the harms caused by its use instead of advocating abstinence. While not discrediting the need for enforcement, the allocation of \$210 million for this program over five years saw 70 percent of it dedicated to fund prevention and treatment with the remainder available to fund enforcement objectives (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 471).

Despite this model, Canada's overarching approach to marijuana was largely a model of criminal prohibition. Diane Riley (1998) of the Canadian Foundation for Drug Policy says this model is an ineffective and inappropriate drug policy that causes more harm than the drug itself. During the first three years of the harm reduction model, the proportion of drug offenders in Canada's prison rose from 9 percent to 14 percent (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 472).

Hyshka et al. (2012) regard the current government's ratification of Bill C-10 in March of 2012 as a move in the wrong direction. Its intent is to invoke a minimum sentence of six months

for individuals convicted of cultivating six or more marijuana plants. By doing this, Hyshka et al. argues that the government has not acknowledged scientific evidence that shows the current approach of prohibition and criminalization has proven to be an ineffective measure (125). Additionally, four issues contributing to marijuana's problem definition – social problems, health problems, a gateway to harder drugs, and American pressures on Canadian drug policies – have persisted during marijuana's prohibition. What follows is an analysis of how the problem definition of marijuana has changed over time as the story on Canada's marijuana prohibition continues.

### **Issue: Social Problems**

The original social problem previously discussed explains the power of issue salience. A largely unknown problem was singlehandedly brought to the forefront by one individual. Stone (2012) talks about wedges and inclines. A wedge is a seemingly small issue that leads the way to a large impact. An incline suggests that once an issue begins on a downward path, it is “drawn further by gravity” (173). Judge Murphy's writings had a significant impact on Canada's marijuana policy, a decision that “inadvertently set us on a course that has sent tens of thousands of Canadians to jail” (Mosher 1999, 21). That policy is still in effect almost a century later.

The original problem definition focused on the correlation between immigration and drug use as defined by Judge Murphy. This definition changed little until the 1970s when authorities noticed a marked increase in recreational use of marijuana among young people. There were fears about a decline in societal productivity because of chronic usage (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 470). During this time, there were numerous attempts to remove criminal penalties associated with its use. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau introduced a bill which sought to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for importing marijuana and reduce sentences for other offences. Although passed in the Senate, the House of Commons rejected the bill without a valid reason. The Le Dain Commission had delayed action to the point where salience was low and the issue was removed from the government's agenda (Mosher 1999; Riley 1998).

More recently, there have been concerns about the high content of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive drug found in marijuana. Canada produces marijuana with up to 25 percent THC, compared to 7 percent in the United States, and 2 percent from the 1970s (Gecelovsky 2008, 209). Since marijuana is illegal, this poses a series of problems, including the lack of regulation and awareness of driving under the influence of THC. Canadian society has seen an aggressive anti-drinking and driving campaign in attempts to raise awareness of the problems associated with impaired driving. As marijuana is currently illegal, these programs related to its use have been minimal, yet Mark Asbridge (2006) argues that 4 percent of the Canadian population have reported to have driven under the influence of marijuana (283). A policy change regarding Canadian marijuana can lead to a sophisticated educational awareness program and research into legal THC limits (284).

In the early days of marijuana prohibition, consequences of marijuana use defined the social problem. Today, consequences of prohibition define the social problem. Stephen Kisely (2008) writes in the *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* that imprisonment of otherwise law-abiding citizens for use of marijuana unnecessarily criminalizes them. The social costs of marijuana use include “stigma of arrest, lost incomes, and ruined careers” (796). Additionally, many people arrested for marijuana-related crimes are already socially disadvantaged, which can be exacerbated by receiving a criminal record (796). Kisely argues that alternatives to prohibition (dealing with the supply-side) will work to reduce the social costs of marijuana users (the demand-side). He says this could take place in the form of decriminalization – applying a fine instead of criminal sanctions – or full legalization (795-96).

### **Issue: Health Problems**

Marijuana is currently one of three psychoactive substances used recreationally in Canada, the other two being alcohol and tobacco (Fischer, Rehm, and Hall 2009, 101). Wayne Hall and Michael Lynskey (2009) break down the ill-effects of marijuana use into two groups: acute harms that arise from a single or a few occasions of use, and chronic harms associated with repeated use. The former group includes anxiety and panic and an increased risk of accident if a person operates a motor vehicle under marijuana’s influence. Harmful effects in the latter group include chronic bronchitis, impaired respiratory function, cardiovascular disease, respiratory cancers, and psychotic symptoms and disorders in heavy users (259).

The issue salience of ill health-effects from marijuana usage rose in the 1940s when there was considerable debate among American scholarly journals, peaking in the 1960s (Mosher 1999). A content analysis of op-eds in the six highest circulating American newspapers found that concern for adverse health effects declined sharply after the 1960s, a decline that persists through to 2000 (Caulkins et al. 2012, 15). Current research shows that the effects of alcohol and tobacco outweigh those of marijuana and there are very few deaths related to marijuana usage, certainly not as high as death associated with alcohol and tobacco use. The argument that marijuana creates a dependency has also been opposed. Studies show that persistent marijuana usage from youth to adulthood is relatively low, challenging previous research that it is a highly addictive drug (Hathaway and Erickson 2003).

While longitudinal studies have shown that marijuana use produces an increased risk of psychotic symptoms, current research suggests that marijuana’s contribution to these psychotic episodes in chronic users is only around 10 percent (Hall and Room 2008, 793). In many cases, psychotic behaviour is the result of a pre-existing condition in people who would be at risk of such episodes regardless of their use of marijuana. The argument therefore evolves to a question regarding the role a genetic predisposition plays on psychosis more than marijuana’s impact on psychosis (793).

The issue of ill-health caused by marijuana usage has been in a constant state of change. The majority of modern research is showing that the health effects one receives from marijuana are far less severe than the criminal sanctions one receives when charged with marijuana (Hathaway and Erickson 2003). As stated by Justice Mary Southin of the British Columbia Court of Appeal, people who use marijuana are “no better or worse off, morally or physically than people who like a martini” (quoted in Mosher 2011, 375). Furthermore, current research suggests that other forms of ingestion will lessen the health risks. The development of marijuana beverages, lozenges, skin patches or other forms of ingestion would work to reduce the pulmonary hazards associated with smoking (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 479).

### **Issue: Marijuana as a Gateway Drug**

The notion that marijuana use inevitably leads to harder drugs is an issue that first emerged in the 1950s and continues as a reason why prohibition remains the policy in Canada. Popular media claimed that because marijuana has not proven habit forming, “it makes the switch to heroin easy” (Mosher 1999, 27). Later, in the 1980s, the emerging cocaine epidemics failed to differentiate between its effects and the effects of marijuana saying that “psychoactive drugs tend to correlate with other psychoactive drugs” (Hathaway and Erickson 2003, 477).

Andrew Hathaway and Patricia Erickson (2003) say there is flawed logic to the argument of marijuana being a gateway drug, as the use of legal drugs is more likely to be a gateway drug than marijuana. Studies from the Netherlands show that marijuana tends to satisfy the majority of illegal drug curiosity effectively creating a “closed gate” to further, harder drug use (477). While it is evident that users of harder drugs did start on softer drugs, such as marijuana, they say that two thirds of marijuana users have never made the jump to a harder drug. Kisely (2008) points to numerous government and parliamentary inquiries from countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and even Canada that dispute the gateway drug problem. They recommend a lenient approach to marijuana, including decriminalization and regulation similar to current regulations for alcohol and tobacco (796).

### **Issue: American Pressures on Canadian Policy**

Many Canadian policies garner quite a bit of reaction from the United States, and the American influence on these policies is often vociferous. Canada’s policy on drugs, specifically marijuana, is one such policy. Paul Gecelovsky (2008) calls Canada’s marijuana policies an irritant in relations between Canada and the United States, as they have historically attempted to blend the two countries’ policies together. The United States is the world’s most determined advocate of the war on drugs and views Canada as generally soft on its drug policies. Until the 1980s, the two countries have typically agreed upon or aligned their drug policies, a functional necessity due to the large, undefended border which the two countries share (Mosher 2011).

However, after Ronald Regan declared war on drugs in 1986, and Canada instituted the harm reduction model, tensions between the two countries have arisen (Gecelovsky 2008; Mosher 2011).

In the early 2000s, American authorities expressed concern about the size and quality of British Columbia's marijuana industry. From 2001 to 2004, American law enforcement has seen a three-fold increase in both the number of seizures and the volume of marijuana seized. The quality of this "BC Bud" has the highest THC content of any other supplier, creating a large demand. The United States Department of State indicated that large scale cross-border trafficking is a serious concern for the American government and they threatened to respond accordingly (Gecelovsky 2008, 208).

In 2003, the Chretien government proposed a bill that would decriminalize possession of 15 grams or less of marijuana. An American response soon followed, with the drug czar John Walters pledging to "respond to the threat" posed to the United States by Canada's lenient attitudes about marijuana (Gecelovsky 2008, 210). Canada came up several times at the Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries. While not officially added to 'the list,' Canada along with North Korea were considered as potential threats (210).

Stone (2012) explains that interests to a problem definition can mutate over time (242). While disagreement between Canada and the United States persists, opinions and interests have changed. Recent votes in Colorado and Washington State to legalize marijuana will have an impact on future Canadian policy. This time it will be American policy reducing the severity of Canadian policy. As Colorado and Washington move to institute their regulations and policies regarding legal recreational use of marijuana, Canadian policy makers will be watching, and a flood of academic research will inevitably appear. Through this research, prudent decisions regarding Canada's own policies based on the experience and lessons learned from the United States are possible.

### **A New Problem Recognized?**

Earlier, we examined the original problem definition. A keen observer of past and current events can predict impending changes to public policy. Indeed, the problem definition surrounding the prohibition of marijuana is different today than it was in the 1920s when it first became illegal. We saw how the problem has mutated over time and now Canadian society must recognize a new problem. Recall Soroka's (2007) theory of issue salience and the use of indicators as a way to show increased salience and later, a policy window. This section will discuss two indicators: crime statistics and public opinion. These indicators help to map the national mood, and point out "discrepancies or patterns that hint that something is amiss" (Pal 2010, 101).

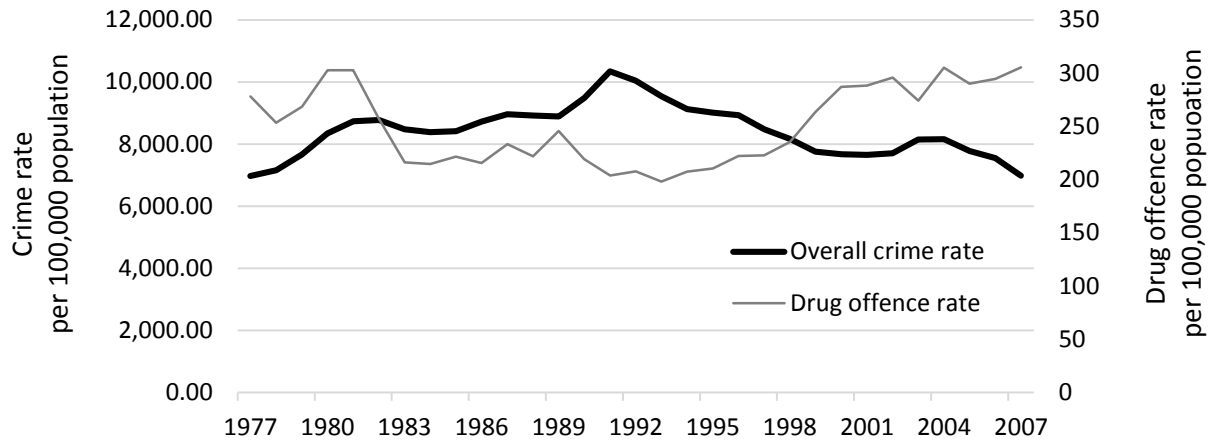


Recent events in the media featured a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer smoking a marijuana cigarette while in uniform. Although the member believed smoking marijuana in uniform was his right because he held a prescription to treat his post-traumatic stress disorder, RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson said the incident was embarrassing for the member and for the forces (Canadian Press 2013). Observation of changing problem definitions can prompt an organization, like the Department of National Defense (DND) to preemptively change a policy in response to a shift in societal values. For example, the *Canadian Aviation Regulations*<sup>2</sup> outlines rules regarding the consumption of alcohol before a pilot takes command of an aircraft. It stipulates that “no person shall act as a crew member of an aircraft within eight hours after consuming an alcoholic beverage” (602.03a). It further states that no crew member can be under the influence of “any drug that impairs the person’s faculties” (602.03b). This broad statement fails to differentiate between cold medication and other drugs like marijuana. Changing policies will necessarily outline the specific regulations and research needed to integrate marijuana into legal society. Failure to do this could lead to more embarrassing incidences, as experienced by the RCMP.

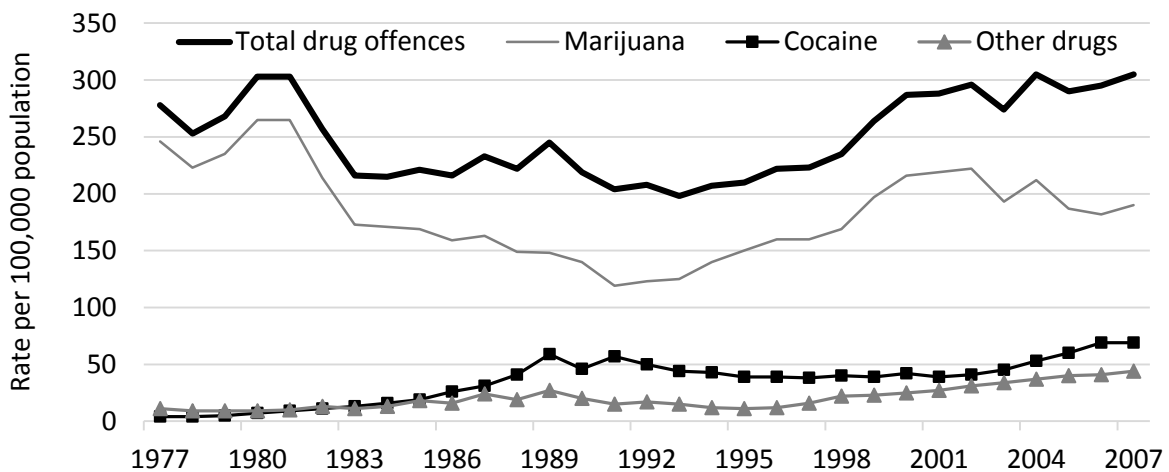
As discussed, not all issues that affect policy makers can take priority at once. Many problems remain problems for decades without earning their way onto the government’s agenda. Other issues such as terrorism, climate change, oil prices, and unemployment have commanded the attention of politicians (Hall and Lynskey 2009; Stone 2012). However, with the economy showing steady recovery, and Canada’s role in Afghanistan winding down, other issues will move into the spotlight. Caulkins et al. (2012) agrees with Soroka (2007), saying that initiatives for policy change on the legalization of marijuana are most common when salience is high (2). Salience is growing, a policy window is opening, and Canadian’s should expect policy change initiatives in the near future. Current research is showing that criminalizing marijuana has not been an effective policy in the reduction of marijuana usage and the costs of its enforcement is a substantial financial burden to society (Hall and Room 2008; Hathaway and Erickson 2003). Figure 2 contrasts the overall crime rate in Canada with the drug offence rate. While Canada’s crime rate has decreased steadily since the early 1990s, the rate of drug related offences has increased. Figure 3 shows that the majority of drug crimes in Canada involve marijuana, accounting for 62 percent of all drug offences in 2007 (Dauvergne 2009).

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2. *Canadian Aviation Regulations*, SOR/96-433. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-96-433/page-170.html#h-737>.



**Figure 1.** Police-reported crime and drug offence rates in Canada from 1977 to 2007. The overall crime rate does not include traffic offences, drug offences and other federal statute offences. Adapted from Dauvergne (2009, chart 1).



**Figure 2.** Police-reported drug offences by type of drug in Canada from 1977 to 2007. Adapted from Dauvergne (2009, chart 2).

An examination of public opinion polls over the last few decades shows a steady increase in the proportion of Canadians who support the legalization of marijuana, rising from only 19 percent in 1977 to 57 percent in 2012 (Grenier 2013). Lorne Bozinoff of Forum Research Inc. (2012) says that given these statistics, “the public no longer favours devoting time and resources required to restrict marijuana use and possession,” instead favouring a legalize and tax strategy (1). This shows the issue is increasing in salience and a policy window is opening.

As marijuana is currently illegal, proceeds from sales inevitably end up funding a black market. Hall and Lynskey (2009) cite two major problems that go hand in hand with a black market. Firstly, without regulation, the cost of marijuana is extremely high, reflecting the risks

and imprisonment of its vendors (259). Secondly, there is no control regarding the quality of product. Not only does the THC content vary unpredictably, but an unregulated market does not restrict young people from purchasing marijuana. Furthermore, black market marijuana is often sold by the same vendor as heroin and cocaine, providing easy access to these harder drugs (260).

Enforcing marijuana prohibition has come at a considerable cost to society. In spite of attempts to enforce marijuana prohibition, Canada experiences some of the highest rates of marijuana usage in the western world (Hathaway, Erickson, and Lucas 2007, 52) and in turn has the second highest incarceration rate next to the United States. This places a significant burden on the Canadian economy in costs of enforcement and incarceration, estimated at \$1,267 per Canadian each year (Grant 2009, 655, 658). In times when governments worldwide are looking at ways to save money, a regulated marijuana market will allow law enforcement authorities to enforce other, perhaps more violent crimes (Kisely 2008).

Often, there are larger focus events that increase salience on a policy issue. The leader of the Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau, has recently spoken about his experiences with marijuana. Statements from a high profile politician broadcasted in the media give this issue salience. Other focus events, such as those seen in Colorado and Washington State's vote to fully legalize recreational marijuana, keep the issue in the media. While still illegal under United States federal law, both states have voted in favour of a regulated marijuana industry similar to that of alcohol and tobacco. These "experiments" currently underway will be watched, studied, and should indeed play a large role in future policy initiatives around the globe (Galston and Dionne Jr. 2013).

It is clear that the criminal state of marijuana is an exhausting financial burden on the Canadian economy that takes away funding needed for more serious crime investigations. The underground market for marijuana places its users at risk by the lack of quality control and access to harder drugs. As public opinion on marijuana is increasingly positive, it is apparent that a new problem definition is required regarding the use of marijuana.

## **Conclusion**

Marijuana prohibition has been in effect for more than 90 years and the majority of research has shown it to be ineffective in curtailing its use. Judith Grant (2009) suggests that since marijuana use is not going away, it is time that policy makers think of a user as a responsible citizen and launch an aggressive educational campaign to better inform marijuana consumers (664). Treating these consumers as valuable members of society instead of criminals will go a long way to reducing the harms associated with prohibition. Their quality of life will increase, and the financial burden on Canadian society will be reduced (Grant 2009; Riley 1998).

This paper began with a discussion on agenda-setting and problem definition; the two work in concert to create a political stream that allows the creation of a policy window based on the salience of an issue and the definition of a problem. Shadowing Stone's (2012) theory regarding problem definitions, we saw how marijuana's problem was defined in terms of causes (marijuana's effect on users), actors who are interested (society), and a resulting decision (prohibition) that seemed appropriate at the time. Inevitably, a new definition results from a shift in societal values, thus redefining the problem. Recent crime statistics and public opinion are examples of Stone's symbols and numbers, indicators of this societal shift. The majority of the public are the interested actors who no longer favour the status quo. The cause of the problem has shifted from marijuana's effects on users to prohibition's effects, which do not work to reduce usage but add difficulty to the lives of marijuana users. A new decision is expected, with high-level politicians speaking out against this policy, and two American states setting a new precedent, Canada's move to stiffen penalties for marijuana cultivation is out of step with current public attitudes regarding marijuana (Hathaway, Erickson, and Lucas 2007). The Canadian public favours Orsini's (2007) responsabilization paradigm that focuses on the examination of risk factors by individuals who are aware of potential harms or benefits of a particular activity. Salience is high, a window is open, and a policy change is imminent. It is imperative that all governmental organizations prepare for this future possibility of legal and regulated marijuana by pre-emptively planning their own policies to prevent misuse or abuse of the legal use of marijuana.

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