

Bill 6-- Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act

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GENERAL COMMENTS

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MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this prohibition could have ended in one of two ways: the government could simply have walked away from the prohibition and allowed the situation to be unregulated; and the other possibility was to go for maximal regulation. To no one's surprise, both the federal and the territorial governments have gone for maximum regulation, so that we are looking at a system where cannabis is regulated to the maximum extent of alcohol and tobacco jointly. Now people are worried about how there will be resources in place to make all of these regulations stick, and that is a valid question: how are all those regulations going to stick?

What struck me most about the tour was the generational divide. Students wondered why we were there. They consume cannabis, not necessarily chronically, but occasionally. They would appreciate a safe supply, which they won't have access to as minors. They could not see what all the fuss was about.

The elders were very frightened about the prospect of legalization because they recall the legalization of alcohol. They have seen the devastation that that has done to their communities, and they are concerned that this devastation will be repeated by cannabis.

Then we interacted with parents who were very scared for their children. They are concerned that they will become chronic users and that they will suffer poor health effects, poor outcomes as a result of being chronic users.

One of the other ironies we experienced was that people who were in favour of prohibition were also in favour of profiting from this product. That is a very, as I say, ironic situation, where people, even in the smallest communities, were interested in having cannabis stores. Their argument was that there is an economy there now, so they might as well make it a legal economy and benefit from it in order that those profits may be turned to treatment.

What is clear is that, if we go with the liquor commission system, which I know the government is promoting, then I don't think that we have much hope of disrupting the illegal market in the small communities. I think the dealers who are there now will be there afterwards, and they will continue to sell to whoever their customers are now. I don't know whether that is good or bad, but I think that that is just going to be the reality of it.

I don't agree with the government's attempts to try to regulate the market rather than having the market regulate itself. The Minister said to us the other day that there would be a cannabis store on every corner, like a coffee shop. Well, we don't have coffee shops on every corner. We're not going to have cannabis stores on every corner. The market will regulate itself. If there is no business case for all of these cannabis stores,

there won't be a whole bunch of cannabis stores.

Where I came to on this whole bill was the importance of harm reduction, particularly for youth. Youth are vulnerable in this situation, obviously. They are currently at the mercy of dealers who might be selling them contaminated products that do them much more harm than they ever anticipated. I think that we have done a poor job generally of educating youth about illegal substances. I understand that they are illegal, but I think the fact is that many youth do use cannabis and alcohol without any acknowledgement of what the risks are, and that is an area that we really need to pay attention to.

The report tries to roll all of these different issues together, and I really appreciate the staff support we have received to digest the many hearings, written submissions, and other ways that people have told us what they think we should be doing with this legislation.

I appreciate the diligence of my colleagues in going to all of the different communities that we went to, I was with the south group, and to sit and listen until the last person was finished telling us what they think. Some of those communities I haven't seen in 10 years, and I was really struck by how little has changed in them in 10 years, which is good or bad, depending on your point of view.

In any case, I appreciate the efforts that people made to reach out to us and tell us what they think of this legislation. I look forward to the discussion about the rest of the report today. Thank you.