

Ted Smith on Cannabis in Canada

Caleb McMillan :: 2023-09-12



Last week, CLN chatted with long-time [cannabis](#) activist and [Cannabis Digest](#) contributor Ted Smith on the state of cannabis in Canada.

Ted is the founder and owner of the Victoria Cannabis Buyer's Club (VCBC), Canada's longest-running (and last remaining) compassionate club. Despite [helping thousands of patients](#), the Canadian and B.C. governments consider Ted a criminal.

"It's frustrating," says Ted by phone. Especially since other jurisdictions – like legal U.S. states – are legalizing consumption spaces.

In Canada, cannabis civil disobedience has always been the way forward. But, as Ted mentions, financially, supporting an illegal consumption space is easier said than done.

From pressuring landlords to raids via the “Community Safety Unit,” the VCBC has been a number one target. At the same time, hard drugs flow freely in the streets.

“I don’t see lobbying politicians to be of much use,” says Ted. “Because they have so little control over these matters. It’s the bureaucrats at the health authority that we’re up against here.”

Ted Smith on the Health Canada Lawsuit



Recently, [Health Canada](#) denied the VCBC a special exemption status. While the federal bureaucracy took two years to arrive at this decision, Canada’s oldest compassionate club raked up [\\$6.5 million in fines](#) from the “Community Safety Unit.”

As [we’ve covered before](#), Health Canada’s rationale is half-baked. But as they have the ultimate authority on the matter, the issue had to be handed off to lawyers. Ted Smith and the VCBC had no other options than to file a lawsuit.

Fortunately, Canadian courts have been favourable to cannabis in the past. Whether it’s *Parker*, *Mernagh*, *Smith*, or *Allard* – Political soundbites, biased statistics, and fallacious appeals to “public health” or “the children” won’t cut it in a constitutional challenge.

The problem is there is no court date yet. “We’re just playing the waiting game, like sitting ducks,” says Ted.

It’s all just pending. We have the lawsuits. We filed a judicial review of Health Canada denying our exemption, we’ve got ongoing hearings disputing our fines. We’ve got another ongoing hearing arguing about them taking the money in the last raid. It’s kinda crazy.

Fortunately, their injunction should get a date sooner rather than later. “They can’t put that off forever,” says Ted. But so far, it’s been one delay after the other.

Ted Smith on his Meeting with Morris Rosenberg



In the meantime, the government truly doesn’t understand why [medical cannabis](#) patients hate the cannabis regime.

Built into the [legalization](#) legislation is a review process headed by Trudeau Foundation crony [Morris Rosenberg](#).

Many fear his official Cannabis Act Review will be as truthful as his report on 2021 electoral interference. Despite the plethora of evidence he didn’t bother uncovering, he claimed no foreign interference.

For example, Morris didn’t bother talking to a single member of the Conservative Party despite them being the primary targets of Chinese government interference.

So, one would imagine that with a track record like this, Morris would ignore medical cannabis patients. Fortunately, he’s at least paying lip service to their needs.

“That’s what this meeting was designed to do,” says Ted.

To discuss what Health Canada’s programs were and if they could be improved. And we’re doing something radically different than from what Health Canada is doing. And so, we actually didn’t respond to Health Canada’s request for patients to go to their meeting. They got a hold of us and asked why, so we told them we were just really distraught at the process. We didn’t feel like we were being heard. They said they really wanted to hear our patients, they would give us a full one hour Zoom meeting.

So, several patients started the meeting by discussing some of the issues. Why this works better than the legal system, with dosage levels and accessibility. Then, they had about 40 minutes of questions, most of which were directed towards me. I think they've heard enough about the problems of the program. They were more interested in some of the logistics, for example, training the staff to educate others coming in asking questions about medical uses. I was able to make a point about how having patients employed in our society made a huge difference because they're speaking from experience rather than what they could learn in a textbook.

Indeed, one of the significant advantages of a program like the VCBC is that it's "patients helping patients." Instead of, says Ted, "pharmacists and nurse practitioners and all these medical professionals be the ones making the decisions. It doesn't need to be so bureaucratic."



Will the Cannabis Act Review Board follow through with the VCBC's recommendations? Ted hopes so.

It just seems like a no-brainer. The only argument that we've heard in court or otherwise from Health Canada is to why they don't have storefronts is "diversion" to [recreational](#). Which is what they used to say. But now that it's recreationally available to everyone, I don't know if that argument flies. But that's all they got.

Indeed, "diversion" is the rallying cry of public health busybodies who oppose medical cannabis. But oddly enough, many look the other way when hydromorphone gets diverted from "safe supply" sites to the street market.

So long as it's not cannabis. The health authorities relabel the diversion of opioids as "[compassionate sharing](#)."

Ted mentions that there's pressure coming from all sides to increase the 10mg limit. "Even Farnworth was saying that has to go," says Ted, referring to B.C.'s Solicitor General Mike Farnworth, who certainly hasn't

been a friend to B.C. Bud or medical cannabis patients.

But Ted is hopeful things will change.

One of our patients was on there [the Zoom call] talking about how he'll use 1500 to 2500 milligrams a day as he was getting off opioids and methadone and stuff. And the side effect of sleeping was something that he needed to deal with for the withdrawal symptoms anyway. So he could just knock himself out with gummies and get off the hard drugs with it.

Ted adds, "I think it was really good for them to hear that someone could consume hundreds and thousands of milligrams and it was safe. It wasn't like they were raving lunatics; they actually improved their health."



While the governments of Canada and B.C. continue to harass Ted and the VCBC like they were a biker gang selling meth to children, the reality is the VCBC is providing an invaluable public service.

And now, even the legal corporate [cannabis industry](#) is recognizing this. This year, Ted Smith will get a lifetime achievement award at the [Grow-Up Conference](#). Tommy Chong will present it to him on October 1st.

It's really great the legal industry here is recognizing my contributions. I haven't really been that welcomed very much by the legal industry because I'm not complying and they want everyone to be in compliance. They are, so I should be too, that kind of thing. Clearly, they're starting to see how poorly the regulations are and how patients have been just left in the dirt. It's quite humbling to get this kind of recognition at this stage in the game.

Indeed, ten years ago, medical cannabis patients fought in the courts for our rights to extracts and home gardens. Did the legal corporate producers contribute to the legal fund?

No, many parroted the government's propaganda about compliance and public health and safety.

But after five years of bureaucratic incompetence at all levels, they're starting to get it. Canada's cannabis regulations benefit a few at the expense of many.

So, will the large commercial producers contribute this time? VCBC's constitutional challenge isn't going to pay for itself.

The VCBC has a fundraising benefit at the club on October 3rd after the Grow Up Conference has wrapped up. What a perfect opportunity to show Canada's medical cannabis patients where your heart and priorities lie.

The Victoria Cannabis Buyers' Club is located at 1625 Quadra St, Victoria, B.C.

Footnote(s)

<https://growupconference.com/>