

Making room for maryjane!

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It seems like it's out with the old, in with the new.

And yet, I'm not sure how we humble humans would explain the pending widespread legal sale of marijuana in this country of ours. Since the word came from on high ??the feds ? the rest of the country is scrambling to not only understand the new laws, but work with them. Provincial and municipal governments will have to make room for the inevitable ? retail outlets, run by the LCBO, selling dope. Plants may be sold in grocery stores or garden centres. Apparently, we will also be able to order our weed online and have it delivered!

I'm far from being a prude, but wow! Never in my life would I have imagined legally buying reefer online and using my PayPal account! I?wonder if LCBO?will employ delivery people, and just what type of uniform they will wear. If you're at home having a party, just how much of a stash will they deliver?

Across the decades in my journalism career, I've seen all kinds of crazy, but this takes the cake.

In my youth, I?remember friends buying beer from a resident bootlegger who sold it to high school kids on Sundays! That was before Sunday shopping came into being.

Location and retail outlets are a big concern, at least locally. Can you imagine the discussions at the local council table when these applications come across the desks of municipal staff and councillors? I?believe King has relegated grow ops to industrial and agricultural areas, but retail is another matter.

Of course, it won't be doors open for pot. It will be tightly regulated, in a manner the LCBO?currently conducts business.

Police will have to ensure proper enforcement. There may be an impact to local emergency services, so even local firefighters may have to take courses in overdose protocol (if they don't already).

The idea, from the government's perspective, is to maximize opportunities for local economic development. They also want their share of the taxes. Selling maui wowie will be extremely profitable for our governments.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) says municipal governments will also need revenue from marijuana sales to finance new or added responsibilities.

Will we see road signs, complete with a green leaf, saying this stretch of road courtesy of Ottawa's weed sales?

It is to laugh.

The proposed minimum age to use, purchase and possess recreational cannabis in Ontario will be 19. The use of recreational cannabis will be prohibited in public places and workplaces.

But what about the front porch, or back yard BBQ? What about smoking in automobiles?

Approximately 150 stand-alone stores will be opened by 2020, including 80 by July 1, 2019, servicing all regions of the province.

Online distribution will be available across the province from July 2018 onward.

The province will pursue a coordinated and proactive enforcement strategy, working with municipalities, local police services, the OPP and the federal government to help shut down illegal dispensers.

I can understand setting a legal age, and possession amounts, to curb those being put in the system for relatively minor charges. Alongside this will be educational programs not only for youth, but for adults, warning of the dangers of smoking the bango. This will mean hiring many more civil servants to carry out such placating services. I find it a bit hypocritical that you first legalize dope, and then create a bureaucracy that warns against it. Nuts!

According to a 2015 report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 45 per cent of Ontario adults have used cannabis at least once in their lifetime, while about 15 per cent have used cannabis in the past year.

Eight U.S. states that have legalized cannabis, and the minimum age for sale has also been aligned with the minimum age of alcohol consumption.

Our federal government announced up to \$274 million to support law enforcement and border efforts to detect and deter drug-impaired driving and enforce the proposed cannabis legalization and regulation. The government has committed up to \$161 million for training front-line officers in how to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug-impaired driving, building law enforcement capacity across the country, providing access to drug screening devices, developing policy, bolstering research, and raising public awareness about the dangers of drug-impaired driving.

Will there be a box on our income tax form, to get a rebate on the HST paid on ganja?

Will candy bowls be replaced by reefer dishes in reception areas or restaurants?

Niagara College will launch a Graduate Certificate program in Commercial Cannabis Production in 2018 - Canada's first postsecondary credential in the production of commercial cannabis. The program, which was approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development over the summer, would prepare graduates to work in the licensed production of Cannabis, which is used as a therapeutic drug (marijuana); fiber (hemp) and as a source for seed oil (hempseed).

Boy, we used to make fun of those making a career out of pot.

This is no longer a one-liner from a B movie about pot heads - it's the new reality!

Buckle up and hold on tight, we're in for a heck of a ride!