



Matthew Oliver cleans some of the bongs at Toronto's Vapor Central on Wednesday Nov. 5, 2014. Oliver is a bartender at the busy downtown lounge. The lounge, which serves snack food and drinks instead of alcohol, and rents bongs and other paraphernalia to its customers.

Legalize it!

Story and Photos by Michele Weisz



Shawn Parker relaxes at Toronto's Vapor Central on Wednesday Nov. 5, 2014. Parker is a regular patron of the lounge.



Artwork by the owners of Kensington market's Roach-o-Rama cafe on Sunday Nov. 9, 2014.



Ivan Del Rio rolls a homemade marijuana joint at Toronto's Vapor Social on Sunday Nov. 9, 2014.

In October 2014, almost exactly a year before Canadians are set to vote in a federal election, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, made a statement regarding one of the upcoming election's most hotly debated topics. It called for the legalization of marijuana in Canada.

According to CBC's website, the statement was "lauded overwhelmingly by CBC Toronto readers."

Some of those readers are customers of Toronto's many vapor lounges. These lounges cater to people over the age of 18 who prefer to use marijuana in a social setting among their peers. On any given day or night, the lounges are filled with people of every race, financial background and age. Some use marijuana for medicinal purposes but do not have a license, while others use it simply as a means to relax after a long day. The one thing they seem to have in common is that they all believe that marijuana should be legalized.

In an article published in January in the Toronto Star, reporter Isabel Teotonio stated that "in Canada, public support for the legalization of marijuana has never been higher."

A recent opinion poll conducted for the federal government showed that more than two-thirds of Canadians want marijuana laws changed, with 37.3 percent of those polled saying marijuana should be completely legalized and 33.4 percent saying that marijuana should be decriminalized resulting in fines instead of criminal records for those possessing small amounts of marijuana.

CAMH is regarded in Canada with reverence and time will tell if its statement makes any significant impact on those opposed to the legalization of marijuana. Regardless, it contributes to the ongoing debate about whether marijuana should be legalized in Canada and whether the opinions of the federal party leaders will sway voters come election time.

Paul Lewin, a Toronto-based lawyer and vocal marijuana advocate is optimistic that the law in Canada will soon change. "I know this is all going to be a horrible blot on our history 10 years from now. This will be another one of these things; 'remember when you went to jail for this?' And so it seems so wrong," he says.

For more photos visit <http://www.michele-weisz.com/marijuana-gallery#0>



Michael Bone uses a bong to smoke marijuana at Yonge Street's Vapor Central in Toronto Tuesday Nov. 11, 2014.



Logan Besai relaxes at Vapor Central lounge in downtown Toronto Wednesday Nov. 5, 2014. The lounge caters to people over the age of 18 who prefer smoking marijuana in a social environment



Ben Reaburn stands behind the bar Tuesday Nov. 11, 2014 at Vapor Social. He co-owns the College Street marijuana lounge with his girlfriend.