

TOO FAR. TOO FAST.

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It's time for the Senate to stand up for health and safety and declare that cannabis legalization is going too far, too fast

The government has not listened to health, police, road safety and community safety advocates.

OTTAWA – The advocacy group Too Far Too Fast is asking the Senate to stand up for the health and safety of all Canadians, especially youth and road users, and put the brakes on cannabis legalization.

As the Senate begins its Special Hearings on Bill C-45 to legalize and regulate cannabis, Too Far Too Fast chair Brian Patterson reminded senators that they are the only people that are able to make real reforms that will better protect Canadians from the dangers posed by legalized marijuana.

“Right now we have a bill that is deeply flawed and going too far, too fast to ram through what is more than legislation, but huge social change,” said Patterson. “Senators have a chance to make a real difference to the lives of all Canadians by strengthening this law with real protections for youth and road safety. They have a choice: rubber stamp a bad bill that will have a devastating impact on community safety, or make sure Canadian lives are not needlessly put at risk.”

The federal government has ignored the clear evidence that cannabis legalization poses major health and safety risks to Canadians, especially road users and youth.

It has ignored the recommendations of its own Task Force on Legalization and Regulation in opening up the possibility that the marketing and packaging of cannabis will face few restrictions, putting children and youth at risk.

It has ignored the recommendations of the Task Force by allowing provinces to sell alcohol and cannabis under one roof, which has been expressly forbidden by U.S. states that have legalized marijuana. Currently, Nova Scotia is planning to sell marijuana and alcohol together.

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It has ignored the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Pediatric Society and their scientific conclusions that cannabis use impairs the cognitive function and threatens healthy brain development of youth under 25. The CMA said the current legislation treats children like guinea pigs.

The House of Commons pushed through an amendment that will force cannabis edibles and infused products to be legalized by 2019, allowing for an avalanche of new products that are dangerous yet appealing to youth to be available. Many of these products make doubtful health claims, but currently do not have to meet any government standards.

Cannabis-impaired driving is still a major threat to Canadian road users. Currently, there is no roadside test police can use to determine cannabis impairment that will stand up in court. But more concerning is the prevalence of cannabis-related road fatalities caused by younger Canadians. According to a ground-breaking study by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, between 2000 and 2014, the most common intoxicant among people between 16-19 and 20-34 involved in fatal crashes is cannabis.

“The prevalence of drugs, particularly cannabis, among drivers killed in road crashes is very concerning. In 2013, almost 50% of fatally injured drivers that tested positive for drugs had used cannabis, and almost two-thirds of them were aged 35 and under”, said Robyn Robertson, President & CEO of the Traffic Injury Research Foundation. “Before legislation to legalize marijuana is put in place, public education is much needed, and it must be backed up by strong enforcement and proven tools to manage drug-impaired drivers.”

More information on the health and safety deficits of the federal legalization agenda can be found at www.toofartoofastcanada.ca.

More information on how marijuana-related traffic fatalities have increased can be found at the Traffic Injury Research Foundation here:
<http://tirf.ca/2017/12/04/fatally-injured-drivers-testing-positive-marijuana-rise/> .

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