

CANNABINOID CHRONICLES



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Medical Cannabis News and Information

PPS Awarded Non-Tendered Contract Renewal

Content to eliminate \$4 million in funding for research of medical cannabis, the federal government has performed a turnaround of sorts by extending the contract with Prairie Plant Systems (PPS) of Saskatoon to keep growing cannabis in an abandoned mine shaft near Flin Flon, Manitoba until September, 2007. It has not disclosed the details, but activists claim it's worth \$2.1 million over 15 months, and was never tendered. The previous 5-year contract was worth \$5.7 million.

The secrecy shrouding the deal surprised health professionals, legal experts and cannabis advocates who say production with no research will ultimately yield a low-grade crop. The government's decision also left them wondering why the Health Department is interested in subsidizing a product that seems to find little popularity with patients. Only 90 persons have purchased dried cannabis from Health Canada according to statistics.

"It looks like the feds are gearing up to force all medicinal pot users to buy through Prairie Plant Systems, whose product is downright poor," said Vancouver Island Compassion Society Director Philippe Lucas, a hepatitis C sufferer who says he needs cannabis for appetite stimulation and pain relief.

"The feds are phasing out private medicinal growing licenses in 2007, yet they're giving money to Prairie Plant Systems to grow more pot. If you ask me it looks like they're getting into bed together," Lucas said. Others call it a monopoly.

"Unless that company demonstrates its ability to provide superior product and choice, people will continue to get their marijuana on the black market." He estimated that 10,000 medicinal users across Canada resort to underground networks to satisfy their needs. Different patients often prefer different strains of pot, which they claim can relieve their particular conditions.

This is where research money would come in handy, Dr. Mark Ware said. The McGill University researcher is the only Canadian recipient of the research grant established by the Chretien government and gutted by the conservative government. The \$4-million cutback was part of a \$2-billion spending reduction package.

Prairie Plant Systems CEO Brent Zetzl defends its product, calling it a "general treatment that helps most clients."

Zetzl admitted his cannabis won't be suitable for everyone. "We're currently researching - with our own money - other strains, and we know it's going to be important to have those available in the future."

Activists, including at least one MP, a Conservative Senator, and the Canadian AIDS Society, continue to call for a performance audit on Health Canada's contract with Prairie Plant Systems.

Sources: Globe and Mail, Oct 12 2006. www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1367/a10.html, and Edmonton Sun, Oct 13 2006.drugnews/v06/n1375/a04.html

Supreme Court Overturns Krieger Conviction

Three years ago, Alberta Justice Paul Chrumka instructed the jury in the trial of Grant Krieger to convict him of possession of cannabis for the purpose of trafficking. Two jury members confessed that they, in all good conscience, could not convict Mr. Krieger yet the judge pulled rank and ordered a conviction. On October 26, however, the Supreme Court of Canada, in a 7-0 judgment, reminded lower-court judges not to tamper with jury deliberations and it overturned the conviction. Juries have been empowered to ignore judges and laws they consider unjust - known as jury nullification - for several hundred years. Even if there's compelling evidence that an accused is guilty, jurors still have the right to follow their consciences and acquit, the Supreme Court declared.

In legal circles, Chrumka's decision should not have occurred when



considering the way that the law is written. But what was more astonishing was that the Alberta Court of Appeal upheld the verdict.

"I'm not the least bit surprised by the Supreme Court's ruling ... that as a matter of legal principle the trial judge cannot direct a verdict of guilty," says Dale Ives, an assistant professor of law at the University of Western Ontario. "I would have thought that the basic principle that a trial judge cannot order a jury to convict would be uncontroversial today."

As the Supreme Court pointed out, Chrumka deprived Krieger of his right to a jury trial when he ordered the jury to find him guilty. In doing so, the trial judge reduced the jury's role to a "ceremonial" one, the top court noted. Judges can instruct juries, but they can't remove the option of acquittal.

"The verdict must be that of the jury, not the judge," the Supreme Court explained.

Mr. Krieger is a legal medical cannabis user and grower through Health Canada's program surviving on a disability pension but broke the rules by giving cannabis to other sick people in need. Originally charged in 1999, it's been a long haul for Krieger but he is very happy with the Supreme Court decision and is looking forward to another day in court.

Let's hope the legal system follows the rules this time, for all involved.

Sources: Oct 30 2006. Ottawa Citizen, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1462/a05.html, and Edmonton Sun, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1462/a07.html

Science: A molecular link between THC and Alzheimer's disease

New research shows that THC may prevent the progression of Alzheimer's disease by preserving levels of an important neurotransmitter that allows the brain to function. Researchers at the Scripps Research Institute in California found that THC can prevent the neurotransmitter acetylcholine from breaking down more effectively than commercially marketed drugs. THC is also more effective at blocking clumps of amyloid beta protein. The researchers said their discovery could lead to more effective drug treatment for the disease. They wrote that THC "inhibits the enzyme acetylcholinesterase (AChE) as well as prevents AChE-induced amyloid-beta-peptide (A-beta) aggregation, the key pathological marker of Alzheimer's disease. Computational modelling of the THC-AChE interaction revealed that THC binds in the peripheral anionic site of AChE, the critical region involved in amyloidogenesis."

The article is available at: <http://pubs.acs.org/cgi-bin/sample.cgi/mpohbp/asap/abs/mp060066m.html>

Sources: Eubanks LM, Rogers CJ, Beuscher AE IV, Koob GF, Olson AJ, Dickerson TJ, Janda KD. A Molecular Link between the Active Component of Marijuana and Alzheimer's Disease Pathology. *Mol Pharm*, 2006, Aug 9; Reuters, Oct 5 2006

Science: THC reduces spasticity in patients with spinal cord injury

According to an open label clinical study conducted at the REHAB in Basel, Switzerland, THC was effective in reducing spasticity in 25 patients with spinal cord injury. In three study phases patients received oral THC, rectal THC-hemisuccinate (THC-HS) and/or placebo, each for six weeks. Originally, it was planned to start with an open phase with oral THC followed by an open phase with rectal THC-HS and then a three-way crossover placebo-controlled phase with oral THC and rectal THC-HS. Due to logistical problems with the import of THC-HS Phase 2 had to be stopped after inclusion of seven patients. Phase 3 was changed to a parallel study with oral THC and placebo.

Phase 1 was completed by 15 patients with a reduction in the mean spasticity sum score from 16.7 at baseline to 8.9 on day 43. Mean maximal daily doses were 31 mg oral THC. Reductions with rectal THC-HS were similar (Phase 2) as with oral THC. However, doses were higher with mean maximal doses of 43 mg THC-HS. It was possible to compare seven subjects who received oral THC in Phase 1 and placebo in Phase 3 demonstrating a significant improvement following the cannabinoid.

Major reasons for drop out were increase of pain and psychological side effects. Authors concluded that "THC is an effective and safe drug in the treatment of spasticity. At least 15-20 mg per day were needed to achieve a therapeutic effect."

Abstract at: <http://www.cannabis-med.org/studies/study.php>

Source: Hagenbach U, Luz S, Ghafoor N, Berger JM, Grotenhermen F, Brenneisen R, Maeder M. The treatment of spasticity with Delta(9)-tetrahydrocannabinol in persons with spinal cord injury. *Spinal Cord*. 2006 Oct 17

Science: THC reduces stomach cramping after eating according to a clinical study by the Mayo Clinic

THC may relax the colon and reduce stomach cramping after eating, according to a study. The study compared the effects of dronabinol (THC) and placebo on colonic motility and sensation in healthy adults.

Doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, USA, conducted a double-blind, parallel-group study of 52 volunteers who were randomly assigned placebo or a single dose of dronabinol. The researchers found that THC relaxes the colon and reduces post-eating contractions and cramping. Further, the effects were most pronounced in females. "The potential for cannabinoids to modulate colonic motor function in disease deserves a further look," said study leader Dr. Tuba Esfandyari.

Press release American College of Gastroenterology, Oct 23 2006

Science: Migraine

Researchers of the Institute of Neurology in London found out that the activation of CB1 receptors causes inhibition of the nerve cells that control the blood vessels of the trigeminus nerve. Migraine involves activation, or the perception of activation, of the blood vessel system of the trigeminus. They concluded that these data "suggest that CB receptors may have therapeutic potential in migraine, cluster headache or other primary headaches."

Source: Akerman S, et al. *J Pharmacol Exp Ther* Oct 3 2006

Dutch Allow Patients To Grow Cannabis

In a landmark ruling on October 17, a Dutch appeals court is allowing an MS patient to grow cannabis for his personal use to alleviate the symptoms of his illness. The case before the appeals court in Leeuwarden in the northern Netherlands involved 51-year old Wim Moorlag, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, and his wife Klasiena Hooijer, who grew cannabis. They cultivated just enough to meet Moorlag's daily use of three grams.

While it is legal in the Netherlands to sell and consume small amounts of cannabis and hashish in licensed cafes, growing and trafficking the drugs are banned. The ruling is the first time Dutch authorities have made an exception on the ban on growing cannabis for personal medical use.

Edmonton Journal, Oct 18 2006, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1402/a07.html

Nevada May Legalize Cannabis

There are several US states proposing measures in the November 7 mid-term elections to allow the legal possession of cannabis (up to an ounce) and Nevada is on the list.

The Committee to Regulate and Control Marijuana, which has pushed medical marijuana and decriminalization laws, thinks Nevada - with its embrace of certain vices and its streak of Western independence - is a perfect venue. Prostitution is legal, as well as gambling, alcohol and tobacco, so what's the big deal to include cannabis?

In an editorial, the rural Lahontan Valley News argued that gambling, Nevada's most powerful industry, caters to "visceral pleasures," and it would be hypocritical to oppose legalization of cannabis on moral grounds.

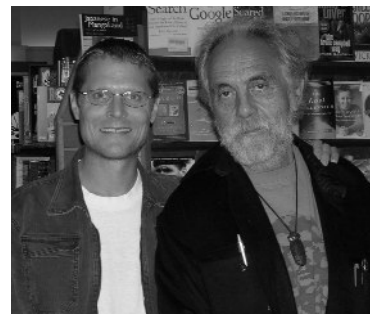
Of course, the proposal has its opponents and some are questioning whether cannabis regulation would prove to be a good source of tax revenue. Considering that the measure directs the state's taxation department to impose and collect a \$45 (US) per ounce excise tax(!), it should be an excellent source of revenue.

Indianapolis Star, October 22, 2006, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1423/a07.html

I Political-Survivor

Tommy Chong, of comedy fame, spent 9 months in jail for a politically-motivated conviction on charges of selling glass bongos over US state borders. Read Mr. Chong's account in his first book "The I Chong - Meditations From the Joint".

By the way Tommy, what 'lake in Calgary' were you fishing at, as per photo in your book?



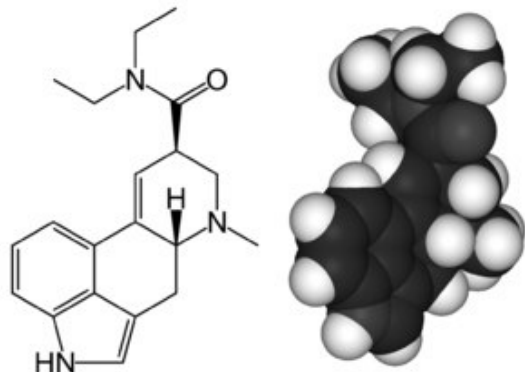
Phil and Tommy in Victoria

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The LSD Treatment

A new study that looks back at LSD research conducted by a team of scientists in Canada more than four decades ago demonstrates the degree to which anti-psychedelic hysteria derailed promising scientific research for the treatment of alcoholism.

LSD is lysergic acid diethylamide, a hallucinogen that acts on the serotonin receptor and is derived from ergot, a fungus found on rye and other grains.



Chemical structure of lysergic acid diethylamide

The original work, led by British psychiatrist Humphry Osmond at a hospital in Saskatchewan, was one of the stranger chapters in Canadian scientific investigation. Dr. Osmond, who invented the term "psychedelic" and famously assisted the writer Aldous Huxley in experimenting with drugs, had observed that alcoholics would stop drinking if they suffered delirium tremens during withdrawal. He believed that LSD, in a single dose, could simulate such symptoms and have the same beneficial results.

That is precisely what happened when he tested his theory. In one study, half of all subjects who took LSD either stopped drinking entirely or reduced their alcohol dependency. The results from a control group were not nearly as good: "As a general rule ... those who have not had the transcendental experience are not changed; they continue to drink." Despite these promising findings, and the fact the research was supported by the Saskatchewan and federal governments, the explosion of illicit use of LSD among the counterculture of the 1960s and fears fanned by authorities resulted in the outlaw of even scientific and clinical uses for the drug.

Erika Dyck, a professor of the history of medicine at the University of Alberta, has produced a new study about the research in the journal *Social History of Medicine*. Dr. Dyck tracked down and interviewed some of the original patients treated with LSD and found that many had never touched alcohol again and, even 40 years on, spoke highly of the treatment. "I was surprised at how loyal they were to the doctors who treated them, and how powerful they said the experience was for them - some even felt the experience saved their lives," said Dr. Dyck, who added that the drug has intriguing properties that should be explored further.

It may be that the crackdown should never have been applied to scientific research, but it is also the case that psychedelics do pose a potential hazard when taken casually or abused. Consequently, it is unlikely there will be a change in drug laws in this country any time soon. Still, it is interesting to consider that, had the Saskatchewan research continued, LSD use might have had a very different connotation and produced a different twist to an old adage: Tune in, turn on, sober up.

Globe and Mail, Oct 16 2006, www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1386/a06.html

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Proposition 215 Ten Year Anniversary

Ten years ago, Californians ignored warnings by then-White House drug czar Barry McCaffrey and passed Proposition 215 that allowed patients to use cannabis as medicine with their doctor's recommendation.

Now there are 11 state medical cannabis laws in place with few reported problems. Even with federal government interference, the model is gaining popularity.

The predictions of doom and moral disaster failed to materialize with some warnings to be almost 100% false. For example, teen drug use surveys in states with medical cannabis laws and before-and-after data show that cannabis use did not rise since the laws were passed. In fact, California teen use has markedly declined.

A 2002 government accounting survey that examined the medical cannabis laws of Alaska, California, Hawaii, and Oregon revealed that most law enforcement agencies interviewed said that the new laws had not greatly affected their enforcement activities.

Polls in all 11 medical cannabis states show public support ranging from 59% to 79%. Of the 8 states that passed their laws by voter initiative, support has risen noticeably in all but Montana where support remains unchanged. National polls report that 78% support making cannabis legally available for doctors to prescribe.

McCaffrey is famous, like Anne McLellan, for claiming that "not a shred of evidence" supports medical cannabis. Yet established research has shown how it can help with nausea, appetite loss, pain and anxiety. Newer research has found, for example, that cannabis improves the outcome of hepatitis C treatment by relieving the harsh effects of antiviral medications, allowing patients to complete treatment. One intriguing study has shown that the active components in cannabis protect nerve cells from many types of damage and can actually inhibit tumour growth without damaging healthy cells. And if smoking the plant causes concern, there are either vaporizers, where the cannabis is heated to a point below combustion releasing important chemicals in vapour form, or oral solutions such as cookies, tinctures or other various concoctions. There are even topical salves.

While a fringe issue in 1996, cannabis as medicine now has widespread public support. And with scientific research continuing to validate the value of cannabis, its community will grow.

Marijuana Policy Project Foundation, Proposition 215 Ten Years Later, October 2006

VICS 2nd Annual Winter Goods Drive
Dropoff jackets, blankets, etc, at the VICS. Thanks!

DEFINITIONS

acid *a.* bitterly pungent, irritating, corrosive; bitter in temper and manner; hence **acridITY** *n.* [irregularly from Latin *acer acris* keen +ID, probably after *acid*] (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th ed., 1983)

lambent *a.* (Of flame or light) playing on surface without burning it, with soft radiance; (of eyes, sky, etc.) softly radiant; (of wit etc.) lightly brilliant; hence **lambENCY** *n.*, **lambENTLY** *adv.* [from Latin *lambere* lick] (*ibid.*)

sciolist *n.* superficial pretender to knowledge; hence **sciolISM** (2) *n.* **sciolist**IC *a.* [from Late Latin *sciulus* smatterer (*scire* know) +IST] (*ibid.*)

scion *n.* 1. shoot of plant, especially one cut for grafting or planting. 2. descendent, younger member of (especially noble) family [Middle English from Old French *ciun*, *cion*, *sion*, shoot, twig, of unknown origin] (*ibid.*)

Professors Win Right to Smoking Rooms

Two Canadian professors have not only won the right to medicate with cannabis while working but also have been given places to do so out of harm's way.

Prof. Doug Hutchinson from Trinity College at U. of Toronto, a legal user of cannabis via Health Canada, appears to be the first employee in Canada to be given a venue for smoking medical cannabis on the job. A criminologist at York University, Prof. Brian MacLean, quickly duplicated his success.

Cannabis activists say they hope other employers will join the club and accommodate workers who, they argue, can only become more productive if allowed to smoke cannabis on the job to better cope with pain, nausea or epilepsy.

"If I couldn't use marijuana here at work, I would have to kill myself. It makes all the difference," says Prof. Hutchinson. "You can lead a surprisingly effective life drowning in cannabis."

It was a novel situation that took time to work out. But once Trinity College was satisfied it was a medical requirement, it moved ahead with setting up the room, a drab basement space with a single window and ventilation fan.

Brian MacLean was a surreptitious user, forced to "skulk" around York University in suburban Toronto, despite his medical cannabis authorization from Health Canada. The criminology professor says he needs a hit at least every four hours to treat a severe form of degenerative arthritis. But late this past week, the York administration informed him it would provide a ventilated office in his building for cannabis treatment. MacLean uses a vaporizer to consume his medicine, a harm reduction device that virtually eliminates harmful substances such as tar and other products of combustion. (it should also take care of the non-smoking issues)

Like Prof. Hutchinson, MacLean says prolonged heavy use of cannabis has meant the drug no longer makes him high. It does render more faint the constant "beating" of pain he feels throughout his limbs, made worse by a car accident three years ago that broke his back in three places.

Not everyone is happy about such on-the-job arrangements, with even a student newspaper in London, Ont. asking, "Should professors in an altered state of mind be allowed to teach at a university?"

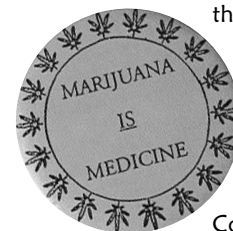
But, as the universities acknowledged, it isn't going away and it has a legitimate place if prescribed and consumed for medicinal use. York U. stated that now that they've been through the process they can provide similar arrangements in the future if the need arises.

National Post, Oct 28 2006. www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1452/a02.html

Canadians Like Cannabis

Support for cannabis by Canadians appears to be at an all-time high, with 93% indicating that they accept the idea of people smoking cannabis for medical reasons. 70% not only accept the practice but also personally approve of the behaviour.

Support for the overall legalization of cannabis is also strong, with almost 50% of Canadians giving it a hearty thumbs up - the same percentage of people who, in a 2004 Health Canada sponsored survey, were found to have smoked cannabis in their lifetime.



Results of the study of 2,400 adults are published in the new book 'The Boomer Factor: What Canada's Most Famous Generation is Leaving Behind', by Alberta's University of Lethbridge sociologist Reginald Bibby.

Regionally, support for the medical use of cannabis is fairly uniform. Quebec is most approving at 96%, followed by British Columbia at 94%, Ontario at 93%, the Prairies at 92%, and Atlantic Canada at 90%.

Support for the general legalization of cannabis is strongest in BC, at 57%. Quebec ranks second with 47% support, followed by Ontario at 44%, the Prairies at 38%, and Atlantic Canada at 37%. Other numbers reveal:

- 94% in BC support medical use of cannabis
- 45% of Canadians support legalization of all cannabis smoking, up from 26% in 1975
- 57% in BC support legalization of all cannabis smoking

It would be interesting to know how Canadians feel about ingesting non-smokable oral cannabis products such as cookies or tinctures. Perhaps acceptance would be even higher.

Source: Vancouver Sun, Nov 2 2006
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v06/n1478/a09.html



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"The only way to comprehend what mathematicians mean by Infinity is to contemplate the extent of human stupidity." — Voltaire, 1694-1778