

# Weeding out the competition

By regulating the drug trade, Canada could cut down on law enforcement, protect its citizens and make a little bit of extra cash on the side as well



TREVOR LARSON

Because of crimes that are related to the drug trade—most notably the killing of the four police officers in Mayerthorpe two years ago—many have been pushing for increased punishment for drug-related crimes recently. While a tactic such as increased jail time would theoretically make criminals think twice before becoming involved in the trade, there's no statistical evidence that supports this claim.

The fact remains that it's just too profitable an industry to be deterred by harsher punishment. Instead we need to end this failed experiment called prohibition and regulate most, if not all, drugs.

In 1916, Alberta introduced legislation—based on a plebiscite—that prohibited alcohol. It didn't curb people's desire to consume alcohol. In fact, criminal elements profited by providing alcohol to many who, despite the law, still wished to drink. Realizing the ineffectiveness, the government repealed the law—ironically, a move also based on a plebiscite—and introduced regulation of the sale of alcohol.

Similar legislation for drugs could help Canadians for many reasons. First, drug dealers don't care how old their customers are—in fact, it's easier for a minor to obtain marijuana than

alcohol in this country. Studies have proven that the most negative effect marijuana has is on the developing minds of people under the age of 18. If the sale of marijuana and other drugs was regulated, with stiff penalties for those who buy for minors, we'd see less kids obtaining and using drugs.

Drug dealers are also not held accountable for the safety of their product. Tainted ecstasy hospitalized young adults in Edmonton recently,



and similar cases happen all the time.

The regulated sale of drugs would mean that one of the biggest dangers of drug use, drugs that are laced with more dangerous substances, would be systematically eliminated. As well, it would allow people to find a more accurate description of what they are taking, what it does to them, recommended doses and possible negative side effects. A more honest approach on the effect of these drugs would work better than just saying that drugs kill.

If there's a demand for illicit drugs, like any other product, why should criminal elements be the ones who

profit from it? Marijuana, for example, is more profitable than any other crop in Canada. Instead of letting criminals sell it, using the profits for other nefarious purposes, why doesn't the Canadian government make it and sell it, eliminating the criminal element in the process? People are still going to buy it either way, after all.

Critics of this strategy argue that legalization would lead to increased use. A senate committee has recently argued against that myth, however. Looking at usage in countries of varying levels of drug enforcement, it was found that there's little difference in usage despite enforcement. One interesting example is the difference of marijuana usage between the Netherlands and the US.

According to a 2002 study, Americans smoke nearly twice as much as the Dutch, despite its heavy anti-drug enforcement. Canada spends a huge amount of its anti-drug budget on law enforcement—money that could be used so much better in treatment and prevention.

Drug policies in this country aren't going to change any time soon, especially under Harper's Conservative government. They're quite happy wasting billions on enforcement of prohibition that has and will continue to fail.

Meanwhile criminals in Canada will continue to make billions off the trade of illicit drugs. In order to curb the problems associated with drug use, we need to start thinking outside the box, and find better solutions than prohibition.

# Hérouxville mentality a relic of the past



PATRICK ROSS

Since 1971, Canada has officially promoted itself as a multicultural nation. To many, this would seem like a contradiction, but Canadians have borne it with assurance and, often, pride. Canadians have perceived themselves as a model of tolerance for the rest of the world.

For many, a recent declaration by the city council of Hérouxville, Québec has shattered this perception. The now-infamous Hérouxville declaration has been denounced by a variety of groups, including B'nai Brith Québec and the Muslim Council of Montréal, as intolerant. In particular, it's been decried as anti-Muslim. This declaration states, in language so blunt that it often borders on virulent, that any cultural norms considered oppressive of women or intolerant of other cultures would not be permitted. Many of the prohibited cultural norms adhere closely to stereotypes of Islam.

In one sense, the Hérouxville declaration represents a town almost bending over backwards out of determination to be as politically correct as possible—professing a belief in the absolute equality of women in conjunction with a professed desire to accept more immigrants. In another

sense, however, the declaration represents an old spectre for Québec: that of the *Québécois de souche*. That is, "pure Québécois"—those belonging to families with roots dating back to the era of New France. This is often, but not exclusively, linked to language as well.

The town states that it welcomes immigrants, but that "the lifestyle they left behind in their birth country cannot be brought here with them, and they would have to adopt their new social identity." This new social identity, of course, would be Québécois.

Unfortunately, the plight of ethnic minorities in Québec has been well documented, particularly in terms of their interaction with "pure" Québécois. In the most public exhibition of this, former Québec premier Jacques Parizeau declared after the narrow defeat of the 1995 sovereignty referendum that the election was lost on "money and the ethnic vote." His message was crystal clear: the "cultural invasion" of ethnic minorities had frustrated the Québécois majority's ambition to establish a Québécois nation-state. Parizeau's remarks cast ethnic minorities as unwelcome interlopers, in stark contrast to the "pure" Québécois—as does the Hérouxville declaration.

To paraphrase Michael Ignatieff, Québécois separatists defined their agenda as "The Reconquest of the Conquest." Such a feat would have to be done under the assumption that the majority of Québécois are in fact "pure laine"—however, the constant influx of immigrants into Québec challenges

this assumption. It's under these circumstances that such visceral reactions as those found in Hérouxville are unsurprising.

They're also based entirely an erroneously defined concept. According to the 2001 Census, 1 889 025 Québécois (fully 26 per cent) identified themselves according to single ethnicities other than French, Canadian or Québécois. In 1996, just 680 275 (9.5 per cent) of Québécois had identified themselves as such. In this context—forgetting even the presence of Anglophones in the province—the security of the Québécois majority as a *majority* is very much in question. So long as Québec remains among the top destinations for those immigrating to Canada, it can't be expected that Québécois will remain the majority in Québec.

This is the paradox of the modern, multicultural nation-state. Multiculturalism isn't merely an ideal for most countries—it's become reality. If the Hérouxville declaration tells us anything, it's that even here in Canada, arguably the world's most multicultural state, many people have failed to recognize that the concept of a unicultural majority has long become a thing of the past.

The Hérouxville declaration thus represents a variety of thinking that has been rendered obsolete. In order for Canada to truly become a model of tolerance for the rest of the world, all Canadians must learn to reject archaic cultural nationalisms and embrace the realities of the modern multicultural state.



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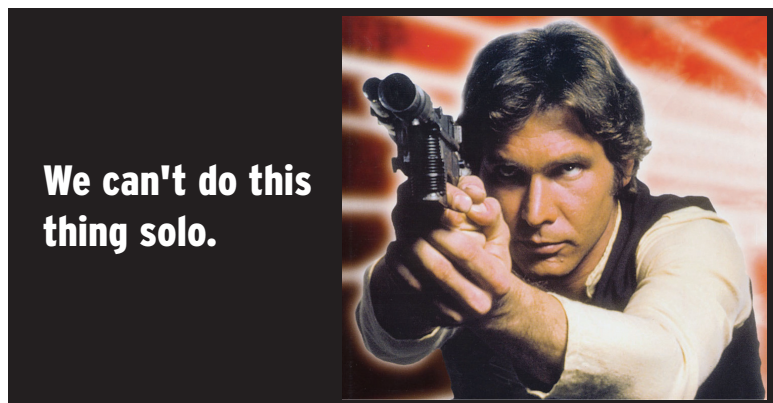
PRESENTS

**GSJS Special General Meeting**  
Wednesday, 14 February, 2007 at 4pm  
Room 3-04 Students' Union Building

**All members of the Society are encouraged to attend.**

The purpose of meeting is for the election of volunteer representatives to sit on hiring committees. Pizza will be served.

Society Members are those with five contributions in the 365 days prior to the meeting who have opted-in with a Gateway editor. If you have five contributions in the 365 days prior to the meeting but have not opted-in, you may do so at the meeting.



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Meetings: Thursdays at 4pm in Room 3-04, SUB.

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