

Alberta Party

Press Release

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Alberta Party Calls For Action On Cannabis Convictions

April 4, 2019 - Edmonton The Alberta Party calls for quick action by the federal government on legislation current before Parliament to issue pardons to Canadians who have past simple cannabis possession charges.

In addition, there is proposed legislation to remove the ‘stigma’ of criminal records for those who have served their sentences for this non-violent crime. The legislation was brought forward in late 2018 and is now winding its way through Parliament. If a law is passed, pardons for the applicable criminal records will become law and address, in part, convictions under the pre-2018 law whereby a cannabis possession offence carried a \$1,000 fine and the potential of incarceration.

The pardons will be available to anyone who has a criminal record for possession of cannabis in amounts of 30 grams or less, which mirrors the new law that came into force this past October, which permits adults to possess, grow, and use small amounts of cannabis.

Pardons are not expungement

However, the system of pardons is not the only proposal before this Parliament. Also, under consideration by parliament is a bill that concerns record expungement.

While a pardon forgives a past conviction, and seals the record, the proposal on an expungement destroys or removes a record of a conviction for the individual.

A pardon does not erase the record of conviction and can still pose issues should a pardoned-individual attempt to cross an international border, such as, the border between Canada and the United States.

Under the expungement proposal, anyone who carries a criminal record for a qualifying, non-violent cannabis possession conviction, would have their records destroyed, that is, wiped clean.

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There are hundreds of thousands of Canadians with simple cannabis possession charges who should be eligible for either a pardon or expungement.

The government is taking the pardons route, according to Minister Goodale, because in his opinion expungements should be reserved for instances of - profound historical injustice - that need to be corrected. The Minister clarified that the federal government, did not consider the cannabis possession charges under consideration to represent the result of a profound injustice.

In fact, this statement is at odds with those of the Prime Minister who has stated emphatically 'that the evidence shows that minority and racialized groups were disproportionately represented among the people who were convicted of these charges.

Faced with similar circumstances to those that existed in Canada prior to October 2018, UK Prime Minister Blair expressed the necessity of stopping the use of minor cannabis violations, implemented under the guise of being – tough on crime – from creating a permanent underclass in British society.

It is the position of the Alberta Party that Parliament, in this session of its sitting, move to right a historic injustice by passing legislation to enable pardons or expungement of pre-2018 cannabis convictions.

Let us be clear, while the Alberta Party does not encourage the use of any drug outside the confines of medicine, the law which resulted in so many Canadians, and Albertans, having convictions for the simple possession of small amounts of the drug in question, was applied disproportionately in a way that is incompatible with Canadian law and values, which has no place in a nation which prides itself on the principles of fairness and the rule of law.

Parliament must act now.

The Alberta Party is committed to proposing innovative and practical solutions that improve the lives of Albertans.

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