

Shelburne Police prepare for 'learning curve' as cannabis becomes legal across Canada

Written By JASEN OBERMEYER

Like it or not, it has happened; Canada's legalization of cannabis came into effect yesterday (Oct. 17) and the Shelburne Police Service, like all others, are preparing to adjust to this major cultural shift.

After Uruguay, Canada has become the second nation in the world to formally legalize the plant.

'We can only enforce what the law allows us to enforce,' remarked Shelburne Police Sgt. Paul Neumann, adding bylaws will be put into place where marijuana can and cannot be smoked.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously stated that Canada's system of marijuana prohibition doesn't work nor prevent young people from using marijuana. He didn't like that many Canadians end up with criminal records for possessing small amounts of the substance. 'It traps too many Canadians in the criminal justice system for minor, non-violent offenses.'

Most provinces have set the minimum age to purchase and consume cannabis to 19 years old, although Alberta and Québec have set it to 18 years old in line with their alcohol and tobacco laws. In Ontario, the limit for possession in public is 30 grams. It will be sold online only, through the provincial government, until April 1st 2019. Driving under the influence is still illegal.

'Profits out of the hands of criminals. Protection for our kids,' tweeted Prime Minister Trudeau on Wednesday.

Bill Blair, minister of border security and organized crime reduction, says the government provided up to \$161 million one year ago for police training in how to detect the presence of drugs in drivers. 'For the first time ever, the police have been given the training, the tools and the technology to actually detect and deter,' he told CBC Radio's Metro Morning

'We're also going to look at this as a learning curve,' described Sgt. Neumann, similar to when driving and using cellphones became illegal, and will treat incidents on a case-by-case study.

He added they would focus on educating the public about the new rules, as it will take time to adjust and understand, and officers have been preparing for the legalization. 'We are training right now in regards to the whole legislation, which is through Ontario Police College.'

He explained that police have always had a policy of reporting fit for duty, but will now add something specific to marijuana.

For more information on the legalization and laws, visit www.ontario.ca/page/cannabis-legalization.