

VICS Newsletter



Volume #2
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News and information on medical cannabis

Medical Cannabis News:

US - Montel Williams Addresses Mr. Bush

Mr. President: In the eyes of the public, I am an all-American tough guy, a former naval intelligence officer, a motivational speaker and a TV talk show host. I am beamed into the homes of millions of people around the globe each weekday. I urge individuals and family members to do better, to be better. But there is another side to my story.

For more than twenty years I have lived with a chronic, potentially debilitating disease called multiple sclerosis (MS). I have neuralgic pain in my feet and legs so severe that I have twice attempted suicide - the ultimate trauma to my kids and family, the ultimate sin against God. I have stayed awake for nights on end, rocked by violent spasms in my legs. Physicians have prescribed myriad painkillers and antispasmodic drugs - each more toxic than the next, each less effective than the other. I have taken Percocet, Vicodin, OxyContin, and a morphine drip, risking overdose to subdue the pain. Instead, I became spacey and dull. I could not function. Something had to give. Something did. I discovered medical marijuana, which is illegal everywhere in the country according to federal law, even though eight states have laws in effect that allow patients to use it without fear of arrest.

On many days, I live with pain that is a seven on a scale of one to ten, and with nerves so raw that if you brush against me in an elevator, I just want to scream. Medical marijuana brings that pain down to a three or four. But every day I am forced to make the choice between criminality and management of my symptoms.

Mr. President, I am not alone. Tens of thousands of Americans, your citizens, make this daily choice. They are people like me who suffer from pain and spasms from MS, wasting from AIDS and cancer, and from numerous other symptoms. Because of medical marijuana, those of us with chronic or life-threatening illnesses have emerged from the haze of narcotic-based or morphine-like painkillers and other toxic medications to continue being productive citizens.

For people like me who have been through the gamut of FDA-approved drugs with no relief, marijuana has given us our lives back. It allows us to sleep through the night, to gain weight and



strength, to read a bedtime story to our child, to run an office. It offers us the liberty - the freedom to live with dignity - that is one of our inalienable rights as American citizens.

The states with strong medical marijuana laws have built-in safety measures to ensure that the drug is not opened up to recreational users. It must be recommended by a physician, and, in most cases, patients must register with a state or local health authority. There are also reasonable limits on how much of the drug an individual or a caretaker can possess.

Mr. President, I urge you to support legal access to medical marijuana across our great nation.

I urge you to support legislation that would change marijuana from a Schedule I drug, a group that includes heroin, LSD, and Quaaludes, to a Schedule II drug, which includes drugs, like amphetamines and morphine, that are prescribed in extreme cases. As a Schedule II drug, marijuana could be prescribed by a physician - with all the checks and balances to keep patients like me safe.

That's all I ask of you. True compassion with all the conservative medical and legal boundaries in place. What better legacy to leave?

Note: Montel Williams 21 September medical cannabis show is available as a commercial free video available at the following:
Realvideo: <http://drugpolicycentral.com/real/csa/montel.rm>
Quicktime: <http://cannabiscoalition.ca/temp/montel.mov>
Windows Media Player: <http://cannabiscoalition.ca/temp/montel.wmv>

Editor's Note: Mr. Williams eloquent request mirrors the stories of many global citizens who find relief for various medical conditions by using cannabis. While Canada has a national, legal medical cannabis program, more than can be said for our neighbours to the south, the program has been set up to fail ever since Allan Rock started taking it seriously in the late 1990's. Both Canada and the US need a medical cannabis program that serves the patient and their needs, not the drug companies or paranoid politicians.

Source: AlterNet (US Web), 2004 Independent Media Institute, Sept.24, 2004, <http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1358/a07.html>



Canada Culture Magazine - www.cannabisculture.com

VICS BBQ moved to Oct. 10, 2004

Noon, Mt. Douglas Park (beach access)
[apologies for any inconvenience]

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Polio Survivor Protests Injustice:

VICS members suffer not only from their personal disorder/disease that can be life-altering in scope, but also suffer from the shameful attitude and policies from our government toward those who are considered disabled and/or ill.

In Canada, being disabled and unable to work translates into legislated poverty, and Steve Palmer calls it a "disgrace". A polio victim as a child, he recovered enough to pursue a career and raise a family but the polio resurfaced (called post-polio syndrome) in 1988 and he has been unable to work for the last seven years. Stephen 'survives' on the BC government disability pension that does not cover basic living costs for disabled people, especially for someone who may require a better diet or dietary supplements (a healthy diet should be the standard for every citizen). Need a new pair of shoes? Forget it. Emergency? Better hope it's not serious... There's no extra cash at the end of the month, most often a short-fall; in fact, the caring of friends, family and community help many to make it through to the next 'cheque'.

Steve has been a disability advocate for many years and is in the final stages of forming the Disabled Rights Alliance which will strive for equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. A big part of that will be public education, he says, and letting people know how people with disabilities live. Undoubtedly, and it has to be said, that some of these issues won't be dealt with properly until someone with power and/or influence is afflicted themselves with Hepatitis C, cancer, AIDS, MS, fibromyalgia,...

Steve is on a hunger strike to protest a "deeply frustrating" 10 months dealing with the BC Ministry of Human Resources. Among other issues, he is seeking a minimum living wage for people with disabilities and relocation of disabled peoples support out of the ministry handling welfare.

We support Steve fully and hope that he has quick success with his protest on behalf of all people with disabilities.

Source: Personal correspondence: Monday Magazine, Sept 30, 2004

CALM Fills Health Canada Void:

Cannabis As Living Medicine (CALM), Toronto's oldest compassion club, recently opened a new location in Toronto to serve people requiring cannabis for medical reasons. Being called a practical approach to medicinal cannabis, the new club is accessed by people calling a number listed on the CALM website (www.cannabisclub.ca).

Those seeking to buy medical marijuana need to present their Health Canada licence or have a severe medical problem, with a doctor's note, Neev Tapiero said. Operating in a legal grey area like other compassion clubs in Canada, CALM distributes medical cannabis but does not permit ingestion on site. Some clubs allow smoking on the premises; it's a choice made by each place.

According to Tapiero, CALM exists because the federal government can't get its act together on medical marijuana. For one thing, it's Manitoba-grown product is too weak, he said. "And there's a huge gap between people who can access cannabis and people who feel it is medically beneficial," he added.

Inside the spacious and newly decorated club is a list of today's menu items: Chernobyl, Hawaiian Punch and Blueberry-Hash Plant cannabis mixes. Each has a separate mixture purported to relieve physical symptoms below the neck, including spasms, and to relieve mental symptoms such as depression, he said. "People experiment a little and tend to find something that really works for them," said Mr. Tapiero, who started CALM in 1996.

Source: Globe and Mail, Sept.24, 2004.

URL: <http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1359/a06.html>

Tax Assistance for People With Disabilities:

A Chartered Accountant firm from Burnaby, BC, is hosting free Tax Reduction Clinics across Canada for people with a disability and their caregivers and families. If you missed the recent two evenings in Victoria (September 27 and 28), there is a toll-free phone number (1-866-829-4446) or a website (<http://taxwise.ca/taxaid/>) where one can apply for a free tax review.

Source: The Times Colonist, Sept.2004, and <http://taxwise.ca/taxaid/>

California Offers Clean Needles:

Thanks to Sen. John Vasconcellos' persistence and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signature, California (finally) became the forty-sixth state to have legislation that makes clean needles and syringes available at pharmacies without a prescription.

"My administration supports this measure because it will prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases among injection drug users, their sexual partners and their children," Schwarzenegger's bill signing letter said.

The letter noted that research in other states concluded that access to clean needles reduced disease but "did not increase drug use or crime rates."

Ironically, the person who ended up signing Vasconcellos' legislation (Gray Davis twice refused) was someone voted in by a recall election, a process that Sen. Vasconcellos vehemently opposes. The bill creates a pilot program, to be re-evaluated in 2010. It gives cities and counties the authority to decide whether pharmacies in their jurisdictions can offer the needles.

Source: San Jose Mercury News (CA), Sept.22, 2004.
<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1356/a01.html>

Plants For Smoking: A few plants that have been used medicinally/spiritually for many years, e.g. mullein used as expectorant:

- > *Nicotiana attenuata* (wild or coyote tobacco) - leaves
- > *Verbascum thapsus* (mullein) - leaves
- > *Rosa gymnocarpa* (baldhip rose) - leaves, bark
- > *Cornus sericea* (red-osier dogwood) - leaves
- > *Valeriana spp.* (valerian) - root, leaves as flavouring for tobacco

Victoria Stinks:

Congratulations Victoria, BC for taking the sewage prize for 2004. The Sierra Legal Defence Fund released their National Sewage Report Card III on Sept. 8, 2004, and the Capital Region is one of the worst offenders in Canada. Victoria discharges roughly 34 billion litres of untreated sewage into the Juan de Fuca Strait, going only as far as 'screening' its sewage. Unless you live in the 20% of Victoria residences on a septic system, everything that goes down your toilets or drains goes towards the ocean with nothing more than a 6 mm (1/4") screen to take out the big stuff.

In 1999, Victoria received an F-, but this time it didn't even get a grade - it got suspended instead. Victoria has made no discernible infrastructure changes since the last report card and is not aggressively planning a sewage treatment plant for the near future. And most unfortunately, people use toilets literally as garbage cans, including the products we ingest and then excrete. In addition to raw sewage, the capital region is a major source of PCBs, heavy metals and chemicals that find their way into the ocean.

People say that a treatment plant will happen eventually - why not now? It will only be more expensive in the future.

Water restrictions in Greater Victoria have ended Oct.1, 2004, but don't forget that water **is** life and essential to good health.

Preserve and conserve water, even during the rainy season.



With thanks to Kreiger for saying it like it is...

Bud Buddy is a Bust For Now:

Bud Buddy, the Vancouver-based mail-order marijuana service being probed by Canada Post and city police, says it's going out of business. The embattled dealer said yesterday it was having to shut down because of a "media firestorm" -- and the prospect of being busted by police.

"I cannot stay in business when there are TV crews outside the place where I pick up my mail," Bud Buddy's operator told *The Province* in an anonymous e-mail.

Bud Buddy had been selling pot across Canada for more than a year. It told customers to order the "high-quality" herb via regular mail or Canada Post Xpresspost, sending cash to a Coal Harbour postal box.

Canada Post said its legal officials were now aware of Bud Buddy. However, Canada Post is in the business of delivering mail, not inspecting its contents, and it is up to the police to determine whether it's illegal.

"It is not up to Canada Post to shut it down," said Caines, Canada Post's Ottawa-based manager of national media relations. "Canada Post is not a law-enforcement agency. Our job is to pick up and deliver, that's what we do."

Caines said it is against the Canada Post Act to open any mail under 500 grams unless there is reason to believe the mail contains something illegal or "undeliverable" - like tobacco, alcohol, corrosives or explosives. Caines said marijuana authorized by Health Canada and intended for legal recipients does go in the regular mail stream but regulations require that such mail is not identifiable by any markings. Vancouver police said yesterday they have launched their own probe.

Source: *Edmonton Sun*, Sept.20, 2004, and *The Province* (Vancouver), Sept.21, 2004
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1347/a01.html and
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1341/a09.html

Where's Mr. Rock When We Need Him?:

Excerpt from Canadian House of Commons, Edited Hansard, Number 241, June 9, 1999.

Ms. Maria Minna (Lib., Beaches E.York) asked the Minister of Health what progress he had made regarding clinical trials of cannabis, access to a safe supply and guidelines for its use.

"Hon. Allan Rock (Lib., Min. of Health): Mr. Speaker, why does this somehow seem such a happier, such a saner place? I am happy to tell the House this afternoon that a little later today I will table the government's research plan for medicinal use of marijuana. I am also happy to say that I will be exercising my power under section 56 of those relevant statutes to permit exemptions to two very sick people to use marijuana for medical purposes. Let us remember what this is about. This is about showing compassion to people, often dying, suffering from grave and debilitating illness. I want to thank the member and all the members here for pushing this issue so that **we behave properly on behalf of those who are sick and dying.**" (emphasis added)

Source: *Potshot* #16, Summer 2000, by David Malmo-Levine

Safe Injection Site a Success:

Vancouver's safe injection site marked its first anniversary Sept. 23 with a good report card, a temporary increase to 24-hour service to meet demand and the plan to expand and include crack cocaine smokers.

An average of almost 600 injection drug users, nearly three times the expected number, use the site each day. It provides about 3000 addicts with access to clean needles, health services and has intervened in 107 overdoses with no deaths, according to the evaluation by the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. Dr. David Marsh of Vancouver Coastal Health, which commissioned the evaluation, said. "It demonstrates that the supervised injection site is reducing the harm associated with the injection of drug use and we particularly mean that with respect to preventing overdose death."

Mayor Larry Campbell said the data show harm reduction is the correct way to safeguard some of the Downtown Eastside's estimated 4700 addicts. The report says about 588 injections take place at the site each day, with an average of 11 visits per person per month. Over a period of nearly six months, there were 107 overdoses by 72 clients.

Source: *Times Colonist*, Sept.24, 2004

Definitions:

equinox *n.* time or date at which sun crosses the equator and day and night are equal (**spring** or **vernal** ~, about 20 Mar.; **autumn** or **autumnal** ~, about 22 Sept.); equinoctial point; PRECESSION of equinoxes. [Middle English from Old French *equinox*, or from medieval Latin *equinoxium* for Latin *aequinoctium* (as EQUI-, *nox noctis* night)]
(*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 7th ed., 1983)

pettifogger (-g-) *n.* inferior legal practitioner; rascally lawyer; petty practitioner in any activity; hence ~ERY. [from PETTY + *fogger* underhand dealer, probably from *Fugger* family of merchants in Augsburg (15th to 16th century)]
(*ibid.*)

solidarity *n.* holding together, mutual dependence, community of interests, feelings, and action. [from French *solidarite* (*solidaire* from *solide*)]
(*ibid.*)

Cannabis News:

Canada - Da Kine Ceases Cannabis Sales, Owner in Jail

Da Kine Smoke and Beverage Shops is (at publication time) one of a handful of Vancouver establishments that has been pushing the cannabis prohibition button lately. Openly admitting to selling cannabis over the counter via the Canadian Sanctuary Society for the past four months, Da Kine owner Carol Gwilt has vowed to keep selling cannabis until Ottawa decriminalizes the possession and sale of the drug.

Not surprisingly, her café was raided on Sept. 9 and it has stopped selling cannabis since a bail violation landed Gwilt in jail, where she sits awaiting her trial date.

The café, until recently, sold cannabis and hashish to those proving they were over 19 years old. There is an application form to join the Canadian Sanctuary Society, a registered charity, but it does not require a health practitioner's signature to permit access to cannabis. As admitted by activists, it has been operating as a cannabis buyers club and it was proving very popular. Couples, students, the odd senior - sometimes three persons deep at the counter.

Then Solicitor General Rich Coleman noticed and the Vancouver police decided to make a show of it, TV helicopters and all. On Sept 9, just before six pm and the evening news, three dozen officers, some in balaclavas, stormed the shop and arrested Ms. Gwilt and seven others. They cordoned off the street, halting rush-hour traffic.

Police state that the shop was no harmless operation. Over \$60,000 in cash, 9.5 kilograms of cannabis and 450 grams of hashish were seized. Police claim the shop averaged \$30,000 a day in sales. Ms. Gwilt and seven staff members were charged with trafficking and possession for the purpose of trafficking. Gwilt also faces a charge of possessing proceeds of a crime.

The next day, the shop was open for business once again and Gwilt was freed on bail after agreeing to stay away from marijuana until her court date.

However, Gwilt was arrested several days later for breaching bail conditions and will remain in jail until the courts have dealt with the charges against her, a provincial court judge ruled. The judge's



reasons for not granting bail cannot be reported due to a publication ban.

Although controversial, and with legitimate neighbourhood concerns to be dealt with (proximity to school...), the controlled sale of legal cannabis is inevitable and several businesses are lending support to Da Kine. La Cantina Ristorante has lent its support with an unusual menu offering called 'pasta alla marijuana'. The owner Tony Raffele added a pot pasta to its specials as a way of voicing displeasure with the raid on Da Kine.

"We support what Da Kine is doing," Raffele said yesterday. "We'd rather see marijuana sold in a store than by all those punks on the street."

La Cantina kitchen manager Daniel Wagner said he wasn't surprised by the raid and subsequent arrests, but thought that intense scrutiny of the cafe was misguided. "I didn't know how long it could last. But there are a lot more problems on this street than it was made out to be," he said.

They don't expect the police to be busting down the restaurant door anytime soon, however, since the special pasta is topped with a drizzle of certified organic, cold-pressed hemp seed oil.



Da Kine customers said they think the shop is good for the neighbourhood. Mr. Vickram, a UBC student, said fewer drug dealers are on the street since Da Kine opened. He praised Ms. Gwilt, saying she is forcing Ottawa to deal with legalization.

"This is a good thing," he said. "This gets it off the streets and away from the gangs."

Da Kine's business licence will be reviewed by Vancouver City Hall on Oct. 6, the same day Ms. Gwilt's trial starts.

Councillor Jim Green, who sits on the review board, said yesterday he thinks cannabis "should be regulated and should be legal, but I'm not in a position to make that decision. What I am in a position to do is see if they are living up to their licence."

Source: Globe & Mail, 14 Sep 2004. www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04.n1304.a07.html, The Province (BC), 20 and 23 Sep 2004. www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1354/a09.html and [../v04/n1342/a07.html](http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v04/n1342/a07.html)

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MS Society

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330-1105 Pandora, 382-7927

Law Centre

388-4516

Sacred Herb

106-561 Johnson, 384-0659

<http://www.sacredherb.com>

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1-877-852-5110 (toll free)

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Vancouver, 604-875-0448

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Action Committee of People

with Disabilities

383-4105

Canadians for Safe Access

<http://www.safeaccess.ca>

Canadian Cannabis Coalition

<http://www.cannabiscoalition.ca>

Canada Medical Marijuana

<http://www.medicalmarihuana.ca>

Media Awareness Project

<http://www.mapinc.org>

DrugSense

<http://www.drugsense.org>

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/ocma/>

1-866-337-7705

Norml Canada

<http://www.normlcanada.org>

Cannabis Health

<http://www.cannabishealth.com>

Cannabis Research Institute

<http://www.cannabisresearchinstituteinc.com>

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing."

-- Edmund Burke