Legalization of Marijuana

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1.0 Introduction and Methodology

According to residents in the Greater Toronto area, legalizing marijuana would have a series of negative effects on the community and the country.   A sizable majority believes that legalizing pot would have serious repercussions on Canada-U.S. relations and half believe it would cause workplace and street safety to worsen. GTA residents are more divided on the effects of legalizing this banned substance on Canadian's Health and crime in general, with the largest minorities forecasting worsening health and divided on crime.

Members of the Greater Toronto community are less united in their reaction to Chief Fantino's comments likening decriminalizing marijuana to legalizing murder. One third say Fantino should never have made those comments, while more than quarter either agree with Fantino or disagree with him but forgive him for saying it.

These are the key findings from a survey of 500 residents of the Greater Toronto area (GTA) conducted between October 22, 2004 and November 1, 2004. The margin of error for a study of the size is considered accurate to within 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

2.0 Legalizing Marijuana: An Unhealthy Decision According to Residents in the GTA

Residents of the GTA were asked to indicate the effects of legalizing marijuana on four health, economic, and social indicators. Canada-U.S. relations would be the hardest hit, with 65% of respondents saying that legalizing pot would worsen relations with this important economic ally, as shown in table 1. Outnumbered by a margin of 7:1, only 9% predicted relations to improve, while 12% thought it would have no effect.

Workplace and street safety would also worsen, according to 47% of GTA residents. By comparison, 19% predicted and improvement in workplace and

street safety while a quarter (24%) saw no real impact. A quarter also predicted no impact on Canadian's health, however they were outnumbered by 3:2 by those who believe health would worsen in general.

Opinion was split on the effects on overall crime, the largest minorities equally foreseeing crime going down (37%) and up (34%), while 20% say it would have no effects. Notably, residents of North York (48%) are more apt than residents of Toronto (27%) and Scarborough (24%) to say that crime would go up if marijuana were legal in Canada. NDP voters (67%) are more apt than Liberal voters (41%) and Conservative voters (21%) to say crime would go down if marijuana were legal in Canada.

Table 1: (Q1) There's been some talk in the media about legalizing marijuana. If marijuana were legal in Canada would…

	DOWN/ WORSEN	UP/ IMPROVE	REMAIN SAME	DNK
Canada-U.S. relations improve or worsen	65	9	12	14
Workplace and street safety go up or down	47	19	24	10
Canadians' health go up or down	40	18	27	15
Crime go up or down	37	33	20	10

While residents in the GTA are concerned about the potential effects of legalizing marijuana, they are divided on the comments made by Police Chief Julian Fantino. One-quarter (27%) of residents agree with Fantino and say he was completely right to make the comments likening decimalizing marijuana to legalizing murder, as shown in table 2. However, 33% say he should never have said it and 27% say while he is wrong on the issue, he can be forgiven.

Reaction to Fantino's comments does not appear to be related to opinion on the effects of legalizing pot. For example, those who believe any one of crime would go up, health would go down, Canada-US relations would worsen,

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or workplace and street safety would worsen were pot legal are no more likely to agree with Fantino's comments.

Table 2: (Q2) As you may know, Police Chief Julian Fantino recently likened decriminalizing marijuana to legalizing murder yesterday in response to suggestions that legal pot would cut down organized crime. Which of the following opinions is closest to your own? [ROTATE]

	%
Fantino should never have said it	33
Fantino was completely right to say it	27
Fantino is wrong on the issue but can be forgiven	27
[UNPROMPTED] Don't know/ Refused	13

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