



Employers now face a time crunch on pot policy

Jeff Lagerquist, CTVNews.ca Writer

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Employers across Canada are grappling with the new reality of recreational marijuana becoming legal following the passage of Bill C-45 in the Senate. The pending change will mean decades-old workplace policies on the drug will need to be adjusted, and new safety concerns considered.

A survey released in January by [the Human Resource Professionals Association found 71 per cent of employers felt they were not ready for marijuana legalization](#).

Bill Bogart, a law professor at the University of Windsor, recently spoke about the subject before the Conference Board of Canada. He said [new research from the think-tank suggests](#) those worries are easing.

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“It does suggest that about 50 per cent of employers are concerned, but only about 25 per cent are very concerned,” he told CTV’s Your Morning on Wednesday. “I think what we are seeing increasingly is employers are coming to grips with these issues.”

Bogart said employers have had ample time to think over their policy responses to fully-legalized cannabis use by workers, given that the Liberal government has clearly telegraphed its intentions regarding pot, and many are using the drug while it remains illegal.

“Since the fall of 2015, the Liberal government has said cannabis will be legalized and regulated. The Liberal government has never deviated from that,” he said. “There has been three years’ notice for everybody to get their house in order.”

Earlier this month, Jason Fleming, vice-president of human resources for Ontario marijuana producer MedReleaf, told industry leaders at the World Cannabis Congress that many workplaces are behind the times when it comes to weed.

“Employers are having to write policies and have to prepare, but in many cases they are still using really outdated, anecdotal information,” he told guests at the conference in Saint John, N.B.

Fleming said companies that routinely throw liquor-fuelled holiday parties will have to grapple with recreational cannabis use.

“Step one is to definitely get prepared, get educated and understand the differences between these products, and recreational versus medical products, and I think that absence of information can be difficult for a lot of employers,” he said.

Bogart said he is encouraged by the extent that type of progress is underway within some organizations.

“Last week, I spoke at a conference held by the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, and I was very impressed. These folks have real issues around safety in the workplace. And they are very focused on these issues.”