Despite majority support to legalize pot, nearly half of Canadians want to delay July 1 implementation date

Only one-in-ten “very confident” their province will be ready for legalization

November 30, 2017 – It’s policy crunch time across Canada. With a July 1, 2018 deadline looming for provinces to have a plan in place for marijuana legalization, some government officials have admittedly been scrambling and publicly calling out Ottawa over a timeline they say they aren’t able to meet.

A new Angus Reid Institute study finds more than half of Canadians – including six-in-ten in Quebec and Ontario - say that they aren’t sure their provincial government will be ready in time.

Further, despite two-thirds support for legalization, nearly half want Ottawa to push back the legalization date to give provincial governments more time to prepare.

This is not the case, however, on Canada’s coasts. Seven-in-ten each in Atlantic Canada and BC say the timeline should stay in place.

More Key Findings:

• Asked whether their provincial government will have a plan in place to regulate the sale and distribution of marijuana by the July 1, 2018 deadline, confidence levels are relatively low across the country.

• Close to half of Canadians (47%) say the federal government should push back the timeline for legalization, led by two-thirds of past Conservatives (68%). A majority of Liberal (67%) and NDP (57%) voters disagree.

• Four-in-ten Canadians (41%) say that the government’s $1.00 per gram excise tax was the right amount to add on top of existing sales taxes. Many people feel that there should be no excise tax (22%) or that the tax is too high (16%). One-in-five say they would have opted for more than $1 (22%).

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from November 14 - 20 among a representative randomized sample of 1510 Canadian adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.
• Asked about the government’s plan to split the revenue 50/50 between the provincial and federal governments, most Canadians (56%) agree with the arrangement. Four-in-ten (40%) however, say the provinces should get a greater share of revenues.

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Two-thirds support legalization

The federal government introduced legislation earlier this year to legalize marijuana, stating that the law would be implemented on Canada Day of the following year. Support for legalization has been growing in Canada over the last decades, and now appears to hold at roughly two-thirds:

Percentage of Canadians who Support marijuana legalization by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975 (Bibby)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 (Bibby)</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (ARI)</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (ARI)</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 (ARI)</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past Conservative voters voice a split on legalization: 48 per cent now support it while 52 per cent oppose. Meanwhile, support stands at three-quarters among those who are past supporters of the other two major parties:
Notably, at least six-in-ten Canadians across each age demographic support legalization as well:

### Do you think the use of marijuana in Canada should be made legal, or not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>CPC</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>NDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, make it legal</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, it should remain illegal</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half concerned over timeline

The federal government has taken responsibility for a number of aspects of legalization including:

- Setting the minimum age of purchase at 18
- Establishing purchasing framework for secure and safe marijuana supply, licensing producers
- Establishing criminal penalties for those operating outside the legal system of sale
- Standardizing serving sizes and potency

The provinces, however, have been tasked with organizing their own sale and distribution plans, implementing traffic safety laws, securing a supply of cannabis and tailoring federal rules such as age and personal cultivation limits.

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At this point, the level of progress on preparation vary across the country. In Saskatchewan for example, no plan has been announced and public consultation is ongoing. Next door, Manitoba has made more progress, announcing a hybrid model where the government will be responsible for procurement and distribution, but private businesses will be responsible for the sale of the product. In Ontario, the Liquor Control Board (LCBO) will be responsible for sales, and the age limit will be bumped to 19.

For a summary of provincial progress visit this page.

While his province is moving forward, Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister has recently suggested that the federal government push back the timeline for legalization – citing uncertainty about his province having a plan fully in place by July.

Regardless of where they live, a significant portion of the Canadian public (47%) agree with the Pallister, though slightly more say the timeline should remain (53%). British Columbians and Atlantic Canadians are most committed to keeping the July 1 deadline.

Younger Canadians, young men in particular, have a greater sense of urgency when it comes to crossing the legislative finish line. That said, a large portion across all age groups, four-in-ten across each gender and generation, say that they support the government taking more time before sanctioning marijuana use.
Much of the opposition to the July 1 timeline comes from the group of Canadians who do not want to see legalization happen at all. More than eight-in-ten (85%) opposers say the date should be pushed back, while just one-quarter (25%) of supporters agree:

Which would you say is closest to your opinion:

- The timeline should not be changed
- The federal government should push back the timeline for legalization

Political affiliation also appears to play a role in how Canadians feel about the Liberal government’s timeline. Two-thirds of the government’s 2015 voters say the timeline should not be changed. NDP supporters lean this way as well, while 68 per cent of past Conservative voters would prefer it be pushed back.
Confidence in readiness lacking

As they are split on the issue of maintaining or adjusting the deadline for legalization, a slight majority of Canadians are unified in their lack of confidence that provincial governments will be ready.

More than half (55%) say they don’t think their governments will have a plan in place by Canada Day. BC and Atlantic residents are again, the most positive, but in neither region show majority confidence that their provinces are prepared. It should be noted that New Brunswick became the first province to officially secure a full cannabis supply. In BC, on the other hand, opinion may be driven by data that has shown the westernmost province to already be home to some of the highest levels of per-capita pot production in the country.

Saskatchewan residents seem most skeptical about the province’s state of readiness. In November, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association voiced concerns over a lack of information available about a legislative framework.

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Six-in-ten Ontario (58%) and Quebec (59%) residents also don’t think their provincial governments are sufficiently prepared as the new year approaches. Quebec, alongside Manitoba, has also asked for the deadline to be pushed back.

Trepidation is greater the older Canadians are. While Millennials lean slightly toward confidence in their provincial governments, a majority of Canadians over the age of 34 voice concern:

How confident would you say you are in your province’s ability to have a complete plan in place by July 1, 2018 to regulate the sale and distribution of marijuana?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18-34</th>
<th>35-54</th>
<th>55+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not confident</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, confidence is particularly low among those with less information to base that opinion on. Within the group of Canadians who are following the story most closely, half (50%) say they are confident. This number drops to roughly one-third among those who have heard little or nothing of their province’s plan.

Just as information appears to play a role in Canadian’s opinions on government preparedness, so does one’s opinion on legalization overall. Those who oppose legalization offer a vastly more negative assessment of confidence in their provincial government:

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<td>Not confident</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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Most say 50/50 split of revenue is fair

One of the primary concerns voiced by provincial leaders has been the taxation regime that will govern cannabis products. The core issue with taxation is competition with the illegal marketplace. The argument being that if costs are too high, users may seek out black market dealers. Provincial leaders have met several times this year to discuss the issues, and consider uniformity in pricing from province-to-province.

For reference, here are the recent pricing estimates across the country in dollars per gram:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territories</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>SK/MB</th>
<th>ON</th>
<th>QC</th>
<th>ATL</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average price, 2015/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollars per gram</td>
<td>$13.77</td>
<td>$7.70</td>
<td>$8.73</td>
<td>$9.99</td>
<td>$8.64</td>
<td>$7.31</td>
<td>$8.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source - Parliamentary Budget Office</td>
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</table>

The federal government proposed its own tax of $1.00 per gram on cannabis up to $10, and a 10 per cent tax on sales over that amount. This would be in addition to regular sales taxes for each jurisdiction.

Asked for their thoughts on the tax, a plurality of Canadians say that the government got this one right. Indeed, 41 per cent say so, while 22 per cent support a higher level of taxation. Opposition is split into two camps. 16 per cent of Canadians say the tax is too high, while one-in-five (22%) say there shouldn’t be any excise tax:
Overall, what is your opinion of this $1.00 per gram tax. Would you say it is too high, too low, or about right?

- The proposed tax is too high: 16%
- The proposed tax is about right: 41%
- The proposed tax is too low: 22%
- There should be no additional tax on marijuana, just sales taxes: 22%

One-third of those who oppose legalization say that this amount is fair, while almost half of them (47%) would like to see the tax be more prohibitive. Meanwhile, half of those who support legalization say that the tax is either too high (22%) or shouldn’t exist (26%).

Another aspect of the proposed tax is the anticipated revenue split. The federal government has proposed an even split – 50 per cent for Ottawa, and 50 per cent for the provinces. Some provincial leaders have pushed back, saying that the regulatory and enforcement burden falls disproportionately on the provinces, and that they should receive a greater share of the pot pie.

For their part, Canadians are close to unanimous about one thing – they don’t want to see any more than half of the money going to the federal government. More than half (56%) say that 50/50 is fair, while four-in-ten (40%) say that the provinces should get more of the revenue windfall:
Licensed dispensaries preferred mode of sale

One of the core debates about marijuana legalization - a responsibility given to the provinces - is the choice of sale mechanism for legal marijuana. Provinces are free to choose their own distribution channel, and many have already announced plans.

As noted previously, Ontario will use a subsidiary of the LCBO to manage sales. In Quebec, the provincially operated Société Québécoise du Cannabis will operate 15 stores around the province and offer online sales.

Related: Just one-third of Canadians support online sale of marijuana

In Alberta, the government has turned the market over to private companies, though it will retain control of online sales.

A majority of Canadians are supportive of each model of sale, whether by licensed dispensary, private business, or provincial agency. At least 55 per cent support each, though seven-in-ten say having dedicated dispensaries that sell only marijuana is something they would support:
The preference becomes clearer when Canadians are asked to choose between the three models for their province. In most regions, dispensaries are the top choice:

And, suppose you had to choose one of these three methods of distribution for your province. If that were the case, which one of the three would you most like to see your province adopt?

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.
For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click here.

For detailed results by awareness and legalization support, click here.