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New poll finds majority of Canadians support legal access to psilocybin therapy

“We found majority levels of support across all provinces, demographics and political groupings.”

Sam Riches

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"The results from this poll show that, when questioned, the majority of the Canadian public support a revision of current legislation towards controlled medical use of psilocybin." / PHOTO BY ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

A public opinion survey has found that the majority of Canadians polled are in favour of legalizing psilocybin therapy, and the support increases once respondents are informed of research into psilocybin's therapeutic potential.

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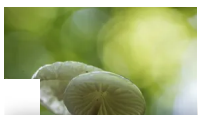
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TheraPsil, a B.C.-based nonprofit dedicated to facilitating legal access to psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy, worked with YouGov, a market research and data analytics firm headquartered in the U.K., to conduct the poll.



More than 1,000 adults, representing all demographics and regions of Canada, participated in the survey.

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This two-time cancer survivor has been waiting more than four months to receive a government exemption for psilocybin therapy

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in Canada with 54 per cent responding positively. That number climbed to 66 per cent once respondents were informed of the research and exemptions that have been granted for psilocybin therapy.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“The results from this poll show that, when questioned, the majority of the Canadian public support a revision of current legislation towards controlled medical use of psilocybin,” states TheraPsil’s summary of the survey.

“We found majority levels of support across all provinces, demographics and political groupings,” the findings note.

Currently, psilocybin is illegal to possess, obtain or produce in Canada and is listed as a Schedule III controlled substance under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA), the third-highest level of offence.

As of June 2021, TheraPsil has supported 32 patients and 19 healthcare professionals in five different provinces obtain Section 56 exemptions to the CDSA so that they can legally use and possess psilocybin.

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However, they are currently at least 15 Canadians, some of whom are facing a terminal diagnosis, who are in limbo and waiting to hear whether or not they will be granted a federal exemption.

Trevor Smith, a two-time cancer survivor in Montreal, has been waiting more than 130 days for a response to his application.

In June, Smith, whose name has been changed to protect his privacy, appealed directly to Health Minister Patty Hajdu, the lone minister who can grant the CDSA exemptions.

“I’m aware that you and your team at Health Canada must be overloaded with the ongoing demands of the pandemic, but I would be greatly appreciative if you would greenlight my Section 56 exemption as soon as possible,” Smith wrote. “My very fragile emotional and physical well-being are highly dependent on it.”

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Spencer Hawskwell, CEO of TheraPsil, recently told *The GrowthOp* that delaying the applications appears to be a new approach from the government and TheraPsil and a number of patients are prepared to take the issue to court.

TheraPsil has retained Toronto-based lawyer Paul Lewin and is urging the health minister to grant the exemptions without delay.

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supported by TheraPsil are not granted within 14 days and the government does not move towards reasonable regulations,” he wrote.

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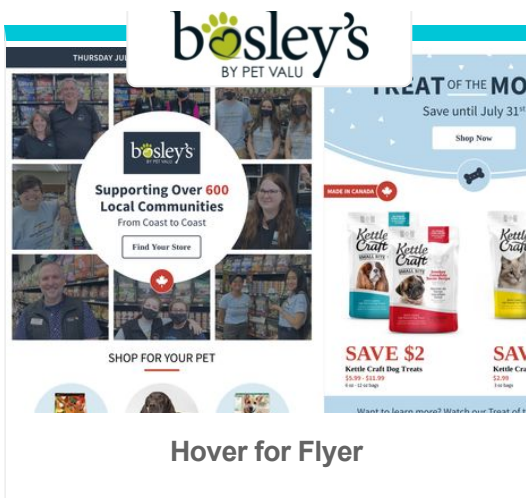
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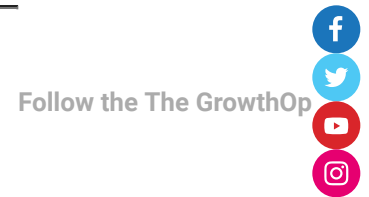
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