



PROTECTING OUR YOUTH

By Lorna Dueck, host of "Listen Up"

It's a small paragraph buried at the bottom of 140 pages of a government study called, *Working Together To Redefine Canada's Drug Strategy*.

Recommendation 41 reads, "The committee recommends that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health establish a comprehensive strategy for decriminalizing the possession and cultivation of not more than 30 grams of cannabis for personal use." It adds that this strategy should include "prevention and education programs that outline the heightened risk this poses for young people." That heightened risk could be any person showing up at your child's school with 30 joints (each about a gram) in their pocket. They may smoke one themselves and would most likely feel like sharing the rest.

I'm fuming about this report's lack of common sense. Recommendations 1 to 40 largely deal with increasing care and education from the fallout of drug addictions. So why, when we already spend over \$18 billion a year on substance abuse in our country, are we wanting to spend more? Anti-smoking campaigns are just starting to work, and to now liberalize a drug that is four times more carcinogenic than a cigarette seems ludicrous! I'm not talking about regulating the medicinal use of marijuana; that was completed in 2001. This is about the debate over widening up access to a drug that the Canadian Medical Association estimates is smoked recreationally by more than 1.5 million across the country.

Here's What Is Needed To Counteract These Recommendations:

More than ever, our kids need us to model right and wrong; and that, of course, derives primarily from parental involvement. The government has already made it clear that these recommendations are going to increase the risk of marijuana use to our youth. So that means every family must be on guard by taking even more concerted effort and time for the building of positive and healthy parent-child relationships. Also, as concerned citizens, we need to make our objections known by writing to our Prime Minister, our Justice and Health Ministers, and our individual Members of Parliament. Allowing 30 grams of marijuana in anyone's possession is not the right choice for the future of our youth. ♪

