

Nine ill Canadians sue to ease cannabis access



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Nine Canadians who are allowed to smoke marijuana for medical reasons are launching a civil lawsuit against the federal government. They want Ottawa to make access cannabis easier.

The lawsuit is spearheaded by two Toronto lawyers who argue that Canadians with legal exemptions to smoke pot should be given access to experimental crops being cultivated by Health Canada. The cannabis is being grown in an abandoned mine shaft located in Flin Flon.

Lawyers Alan Young and Leora Shemesh will ask the court to rule that existing pot laws are unconstitutional in the lawsuit.

"The Liberal government should stop the double-talk and admit they're conning the public. They say marijuana is available (but) they have no intention of providing it for medical reasons," Catherine Devries said.

Devries, 44, buys marijuana from dealers in her hometown of Kitchener or from Ontario compassion clubs located in Toronto and London. She suffers from painful spine and bowel conditions.

Ottawa has harvested more than 250 kilograms of the federally-sanctioned marijuana. Devries believes it should be distributed through pharmacies the same way other narcotics are dispensed.

Health Minister Anne McLellan says Ottawa won't release any of the marijuana to sick and dying patients until it's been tested in clinical trials.

Meanwhile, a Senate committee is planning to hold a series of public hearing across the country to see what Canadians think about decriminalizing marijuana. The committee expects to release its final report in August.

Earlier this month, the committee released a preliminary report saying scientific evidence suggests marijuana isn't a so-called gateway drug that leads to the use of harder drugs.

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