

# Canada's plans to legalize marijuana contravene UN's international conventions

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The Canadian government's plan to legalize marijuana contravenes its current legal obligations to the United Nation's international drug-control conventions, states a commentary in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

"The [federal government](#) should immediately take proactive steps to seek a reservation to the [marijuana](#) provisions of these treaties and/or to initiate their renegotiation in light of its legalization plans," write Dr. Steven Hoffman and Ms. Roojin Habibi, both with the Global Strategy Lab at the University of Ottawa's Centre for Health Law, Policy and Ethics. "If these diplomatic efforts fail, Canada must formally withdraw from these treaties to avoid undermining international law and compromising its global position."

Three legally binding international treaties control or prohibit access to various drugs around the world, including marijuana.

Other jurisdictions, such as Colorado and Washington in the United States and Uruguay, have legalized marijuana and violate current UN conventions.

The authors suggest that the most feasible option for Canada is to withdraw from these treaties. The federal government could then fulfill its campaign promise to legalize marijuana without violating [international law](#).

"Formally withdrawing from outdated treaties like these is a country's sovereign right. It may also be a moral duty if the government believes the conventions' required policies are harmful," state the authors.

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal*,  
[www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160369](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160369)

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