

Assistance available to Canadian travellers was generally viewed as information from the consulate and possibly providing a lawyer.

Communications And Advertising

It was generally felt that people know the risks and consequences associated with using drugs, buying drugs, transporting drugs and smuggling drugs when travelling in foreign countries. Many participants felt that information was not necessary given the fact that drugs are illegal in Canada. "If it's not allowed here, you shouldn't assume it's allowed elsewhere." A massive information campaign was viewed as becoming particularly important should Canada eventually decriminalize or legalize marijuana. Then people would have to be constantly informed that although it is allowed here, it is not necessarily allowed elsewhere. But given the current context, people felt that everyone knew of the dangers of dealing with drugs both here and when travelling to foreign countries.

It was felt that drug smugglers, those who transport large quantities of usually hard drugs for financial gains, are definitely aware of the risks and consequences and that very little information could be effective. Risks and consequences of dealing with hard drugs or with large quantities of drugs are usually well known even if people may not know the severity of a potential sentence or the exact conditions of their correctional systems. What was less known were the consequences of being caught smoking, buying or transporting small quantities of soft drugs.

Participants were mainly concerned with the consequences of transporting small quantities of drugs particularly to the States. They were also concerned with the consequences of getting caught buying or smoking drugs in countries where the drug laws are lenient. It was therefore felt that very little could be communicated to discourage smugglers from taking the risk but that the average person could be made more aware of the risks and consequences of dealing with small quantities of soft drugs. For instance, people felt that any communication strategy should focus on the individual carrying a few joints of marijuana for personal use, as opposed to the one transporting a few kilos of heroin for major financial gain. People clearly do not identify themselves with "high-rolling" smugglers but many did relate as users of soft drugs.

It was suggested that any advertising campaign should focus on informing people about the dangers of transporting drugs, even a small quantity of soft ones. For instance, it should be stressed that crossing into certain countries with a few joints is considered drug smuggling regardless of the type and quantity of drugs, and can result in some very harsh penalties.