

# WATERLOO CHRONICLE

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# VIEWPOINT

WATERLOO CHRONICLE



## CHRONICLE EDITORIAL

### A test of our tolerance

It's one thing for us to tell you what we think the uproar around a faith community's plan to open a new centre in Laurelwood is about.

But we leave it up to supporters of the project, who said they've never seen this kind of outrage over one of their proposed projects before. While the opposition to the planned Muslim prayer centre seems to be couched in concerns over traffic and parking, online petitions, raw emotions displayed in a YouTube video and outright demeaning allegations made about the suitability suggest there is something bigger at play here — racism.

It's the type of Islamophobia that federal politicians argued about when they made a recent motion to condemn it in the House of Commons. The motion called on the Commons to condemn Islamophobia and "all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination." It asked that a Commons committee study how the government can eliminate the problem and collect data on hate crimes.

And it didn't come without its share of controversy, demonstrating how charged these times are and how the fear of the other seems to be adding fuel to the fire.

If this site was for a Christian denomination, we're left to wonder if there would be as much outrage over this proposal. We know there wouldn't be because there are 10 other faith groups and churches that have buildings in a six-kilometre radius of this proposed prayer centre. There wasn't the same hue or cry raised over them.

And the arguments around traffic and parking seem to be convenient covers when there are two major commercial centres right in that area and a public high school with more than 1,000 students.

That's what turns this into a standard Not In My Backyard opposition to this proposal to something more ominous. It's a test of our tolerance and unfortunately some of us are failing.

### Still a lot a smoke around the pot issue

It seems like we'll be celebrating another leaf come Canada Day 2018.

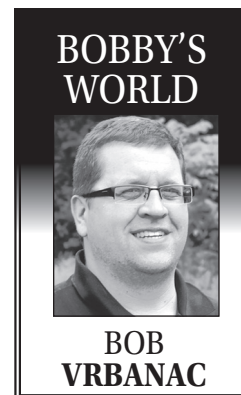
It won't be the red maple leaf, as it was leaked out on Sunday, this spring the Canadian federal government would be starting the legalization process it promised.

The delay has raised a lot of questions, most importantly about the rollout and implementation.

Legalization is one thing. How the government intends to regulate it is another. In particular, how does it intend to keep it away from minors who may be adversely affected by the availability of pot?

I think we can all agree the research is pretty solid on the detrimental effects smoking pot can have on the developing brain. The American Psychological Society put out a report in 2015 about a Duke University team that found persistent marijuana use led to a decline in the developing brain. Even when it adjusted for educational differences, the decline was seen across the board.

The study said the decline was in the same ballpark as



lead exposure, and we all know about the long-term dangers of exposure to this toxic metal. The researchers were kind when they said the effects weren't insignificant.

The report's ultimate findings is that young adults would be best served by not having access to marijuana until they are in their mid-20s and most of their brain development has taken place.

I think we can all agree the debate over whether to legalize marijuana is over, but what is still unsettled is how access is granted going forward.

The federal government has recognized concerns about age restrictions suggesting that

no one under 18 will be able to legally attain marijuana.

There was also a nod to have some of those decisions made on the provincial level, and in places like Ontario the smoking age will probably reflect the drinking age of 19.

The means of sales in Ontario will probably be restricted as well, and the provincial government has argued for a long time that its LCBO stores, which have strict handling and identification requirements, would be the best place to roll out any legalized pot sales.

Proponents are also arguing there should be a strong educational component when legalization happens, but it's rather disingenuous when at the same time the government says pot is OK. As a parent, it circumvents a lot of the "drugs are bad for you" arguments we still use.

There are still a lot of questions to answer about THC levels, standardization and production of pot. Also, there will be questions of smoking it when we already know those health effects.

A year might not be enough time to get all those questions answered.