

Statement by Attorney General the Hon. Trevor Moniz regarding cannabis reform, February 1, 2017

I am pleased to hear that the Progressive Labour Party is onboard with the Government's plan to decriminalize possession of small amounts of cannabis.

The Government committed to doing so in last November's Throne Speech and has initiated consultations with the Department of Public Prosecutions and the Bermuda Police Service to develop appropriate legislation.

The aim of the legislation is to eliminate unjust consequences that have occurred under the current system, most particularly the unnecessary criminalization of young Bermudians.

Our commitment to decriminalize possession of small amounts of cannabis is one step in the Government's efforts to reform Bermuda's cannabis laws as they relate to the criminal justice system and public health.

In 2016, we passed legislation that would allow the Director of Public Prosecutions to authorize Police to issue a formal warning to an individual instead of charge.

Also in 2016, we allowed the use of "medical marijuana" and pledged in November's Throne Speech to further reform for more medical treatment options through the importation of herbal supplements containing Cannabinol.

While I appreciate the PLP's need to be seen to be leading this issue, the Government has initiated a responsible and inclusive approach to the development of this important change in the law. Proceeding without the input of the Bermuda Police Service and the Department of Public Prosecutions would be premature and flawed.

Partisan political manoeuvring should not interfere with the responsible implementation of changes to our laws. In this regard, the Government looks forward to working with the Opposition to move this important

reform forward for a better Bermuda.

For the record, the following is the Government's Throne Speech commitment on decriminalization:

"The Government will consult with respect to the decriminalization for possession of small amounts of cannabis. To that end, Government reforms will preserve police powers to confiscate cannabis and to test whether road users are under the influence of cannabis. These reforms will complement our efforts to educate our youth about the dangerous effects of drug use, balancing the need to reduce the consumption of cannabis while avoiding the unnecessary criminalization of our young people."