

Intervention: Demand Reduction

CND Intersessional Meetings, September 25-28

- Thank you Madame Chair. I take the floor today to provide the Commission with an update on how Canada has domestically implemented demand reduction and related measures from the UNGASS outcome document and 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action.
- As many CND members are aware, Canada is currently experiencing a public health emergency stemming from the proliferation of highly potent synthetic opioids that have dramatically increased the numbers of opioid-related overdoses and deaths.
- The Government of Canada has responded with a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate and evidence-based approach to address the opioid crisis, guided by the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy.
- First and foremost, our priority has been to save lives by reducing the harms of problematic drug use. We have expanded the number of supervised consumption sites across the country to keep people alive and facilitate entry into drug treatment services. This is because Canadian and international evidence shows clearly that they help to save lives and improve health.
- We've also focused on expanding access to voluntary treatment programs through the provision of funding a new Emergency Treatment Fund. This one-time emergency funding of \$150 million is directed to Canada's provinces and territories to help people who suffer from problematic substance use have access to evidence-based treatment services.
- In addition, our Government is working to provide better access for First Nations and Inuit Communities to access treatment through new funding, including for culturally specific treatment programs.
- Madame Chair, part of our efforts to increase access to treatment, have also included efforts to reduce barriers to accessing treatment. The 2009 Plan of Action speaks to the need to reduce discrimination associated with substance use and promote the concept of problematic substance use as a

complex multifactorial health disorder. Similarly, the UNGASS outcome document speaks to the need to encourage voluntary participation in drug treatment programs and to prevent social marginalization and promote non-stigmatizing attitudes to people who use drugs.

- Canada's experience has shown that for people that suffer from problematic substance use, stigma and discriminatory attitudes can act as a barrier when they are seeking or accessing health, care, or other social services.. Reducing stigma is therefore key to effectively addressing problematic substance use, and is a critical step in recognizing the fundamental rights and dignity of all people, including those who use drugs.
- It is for this reason that Canada was pleased to champion a resolution on stigma at last year's CND, and will continue to prioritize addressing stigma both domestically and internationally.
- Finally, Madame Chair, we know to effectively address this crisis we also need to focus on prevention.
- The Government of Canada has therefore implemented a number of awareness and prevention activities to reduce demand for opioids. Our efforts include aggressive restrictions on opioid marketing activities, new opioid prescribing guidelines, and awareness campaigns to inform Canadians, especially youth, about the risks of opioid use.
- These are just some of the activities Canada has implemented to reduce the demand for illicit drugs and substances and to increase treatment options for those who suffer from problematic substance use disorders.