

The Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy: a public health approach to substance use issues

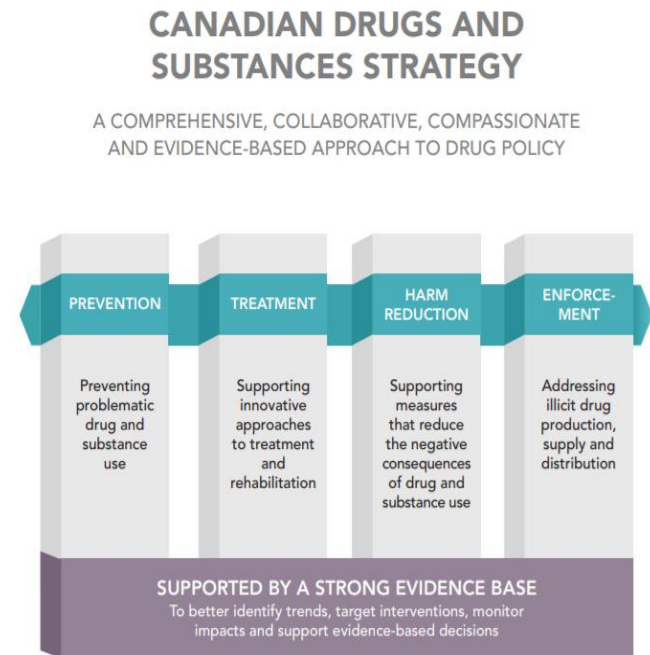
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YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY... OUR PRIORITY.

Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (CDSS)

- The Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (CDSS) is a health focussed approach to substance use issues in Canada.
- It is a comprehensive, collaborative and compassionate approach that is grounded in evidence.
- It includes **harm reduction** as a key pillar, alongside **prevention, treatment, and enforcement.**



Recent Progress under the CDSS

- This national strategy has helped guide the federal response to the opioids crisis
 - Naloxone available without a prescription
 - Importation of drugs for an urgent public health need
 - \$150 million for treatment capacity (Budget 2018), including support for innovative approaches, including hydromorphone distribution project in British Columbia
- Overdose prevention site exemptions and drug checking pilot programs
- Strong focus on raising awareness and reducing stigma towards people who use drugs

The Need for Action to Address Stigma

Stigma is negative attitudes and beliefs about a group of people due to their circumstances in life. Stigma involves discrimination and prejudice.

Stigma Causes....

- ✓ Barriers to receiving health and social services.
- ✓ Reduced quality of care.
- ✓ People to be less likely to seek support and treatment again.

“Negative, stigmatizing language, whether it is used in a healthcare setting or in the news media, discredits people who use drugs and can result in discrimination. Stigmatization contributes to isolation and means people will be less likely to access services. This has a direct, detrimental impact on the health of people who use drugs.”

❖ *Dr. Jane Buxton, harm reduction lead at the BC Centre for Disease Control.*

CHANGING HOW WE TALK ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE*

The language we use has a direct and profound impact on those around us. The negative impacts of stigma can be reduced by changing the language we use about substance use.

TWO KEY PRINCIPLES INCLUDE:

- Using neutral, medically accurate terminology when describing substance use
- Using "people-first" language, that focuses first on the individual or individuals, not the action (e.g. "people who use drugs")

It is also important to make sure that the language we use to talk about substance use is respectful and compassionate.

TOPIC	INSTEAD OF	USE
People who use drugs	Addicts Junkies Users Drug abusers Recreational drug user	People who use drugs People with a substance use disorder People with lived/living experience People who occasionally use drugs
People who have used drugs	Former drug addict Referring to a person as being "clean"	People who have used drugs People with lived/living experience People in recovery
Drug use	Substance/drug abuse Substance/drug misuse	Substance/drug use Substance use disorder/opioid use disorder Problematic [drug] use [Drug] dependence

The Importance of Sex and Gender in Policy-Making

- Health Canada aims to use robust sex and gender based analysis to inform both policy and regulatory decisions under the CDSS.
- In the report *Women, Girls, and Prescription Medication (2015)*, the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health highlights:
 - a shortage of sex-specific and gender-sensitive research on the causes and effects of problematic substance use in Canada; and
 - a need for sex and gender-sensitive prescribing guidelines, practices, and treatments in Canada.
- As a first step, Canada has conducted an assessment of a key gender gap in accessing harm reduction services – the reliance of some marginalized women on peer-assisted injections.
 - Canada has authorized a temporary 6-month pilot in six supervised consumption sites, to assess whether peer assistance will allow women and vulnerable populations to more readily access the wraparound services provided by SCS.

Next Steps Under the CDSS

- Canada has launched a national consultation to channel the broader conversation around substance use issues in Canada, and provide a formal mechanism for the views of Canadians to be heard and taken into account
 - Needs of at-risk groups can be better addressed, including more direct engagement and involvement of people who use drugs in policies and program design
 - This is a good time to take stock, and gather new and innovative ideas to help inform a longer term outlook
- This consultation is open under December 4, 2018, and all comments will be considered in developing the next policy initiatives under the CDSS.

Aim for Improvements within Nine Themes

Addressing root causes of problematic substance use

Better addressing the needs of Canadians living with pain

Reducing stigma around substance use

Improving access to comprehensive, evidence-based treatment services

Innovative approaches to harm reduction

Applying a health lens to regulation and enforcement activities

Supporting Indigenous peoples

Addressing the needs of at-risk populations

Grounding substance use policy in evidence

Thank you.

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Consultation Online:

www.canada.ca/substance-use-consultation

