



CANADA'S DRUG STRATEGY

ISSUE:

Recent public debate surrounding changes to Canada's drug laws have reinforced the need to adopt a national approach to drug use in Canada and to ensure that young people have accurate information concerning the harms associated with the use of drugs, including marijuana.

Canada Needs A National Drug Strategy

As front-line professionals who see first-hand the impact of drugs in our society, police officers share a goal of encouraging all Canadians, particularly children and our youth, to "stay drug free".

The CPPA does not support or endorse the legalization of marijuana or any other currently illicit substances. Drugs are illegal because drugs are harmful. Illegal drugs, including cannabis, present adverse health effects.

The CPPA advocates a balanced approach that reduces the adverse effects associated with drug use by limiting both the supply of and demand for illicit drugs, enabling an integrated approach to prevention, education, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation and research.

Greater emphasis and resources must be provided for stakeholders involved in both demand and supply reduction, with a focus on public education and awareness.

Demand Reduction

While Canada's existing laws have been successful in limiting the harm caused by illicit drug use, there needs to be a sustained effort to educate Canadians, particularly vulnerable young people, about the adverse effects of illicit drug use. Young people are receiving conflicting and often confusing messages about the harms associated with Marijuana use.

Alternative justice measures are required to efficiently and effectively address summary conviction offences. The CPPA advocates the adoption of alternative justice measures that instill meaningful, appropriate and graduated consequences, focused on preventing and deterring drug use amongst all Canadians. Police should retain discretion to lay criminal charges for marijuana possession where circumstances warrant, *regardless of the quantity*.

Supply Reduction

The illicit drug trade is inextricably linked to criminal activity, including terrorism, and increases the level of violence and crime in our communities. Canada's Drug laws must provide police with tools to effectively combat the illegal drug trade, Organized Crime, and Terrorism.

Our communities are experiencing an unprecedented increase in the illegal operations established for the clandestine production and distribution of drugs, including cultivation and distribution of marijuana (commonly referred to as clandestine labs and grow operations).

There is now broad public awareness that such criminal activity is a threat to the safety and to the well being of people of our community. Neighbourhoods are being exposed to risks due to tampering with hydro access, fire hazards, chemical and biological hazards, and booby traps, in addition to criminal activity. There are residual effects which contribute to additional threats of crime that could impact innocent members of our community. Hydro, insurance, and realty companies are working with police to address this problem.

It is recognized that the unprecedented increase in the illegal manufacture of drugs and cultivation and distribution of marijuana is the result of organized criminal activity. Most of the drugs manufactured or cultivated in Canada are for distribution in the United States, raising additional concerns for border security and trade.

Local municipalities have recently passed resolutions directed towards provincial and federal legislative changes recommending increased penalties and streamlining the processes associated with the Proceeds of Crime legislation. Current penalties given to individuals involved in this form of criminal activity are ineffective as they do not have the required deterrent necessary to prevent the continuation of these offences, and appropriate sentencing must occur in order to promote safety and security in all communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS – NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY

- The Canadian Professional Police Association is calling for A National Drug Strategy that incorporates a balanced approach to reduce the adverse effects associated with drug use by limiting both the supply of and demand for illicit drugs, enabling an integrated approach to prevention, education, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation and research.
- Greater emphasis and resources must be provided for stakeholders involved in both demand and supply reduction, with a focus on public education and awareness.
- While we do not oppose the use of alternative measures, such as a ticket, to deal with relatively minor incidents of marijuana possession, we believe that such measures should instill meaningful, appropriate, and graduated consequences, focused on preventing and deterring drug use. We maintain that police should retain the discretion to lay a criminal charge or issue a ticket for any offence of possession under 30 grams.
- Clandestine laboratories and grow operations pose a serious threat to our communities and recommends that legislative changes be made to ensure effective deterrents are in place, not only in the form of minimum periods of incarceration, but also in the form of substantial financial penalties.
- Before reducing the perceived consequences of marijuana possession, we need legislation and tools to deal with drivers on our highways who are impaired by drugs. In addition to the need for new legislation to enhance police enforcement powers in situations where drug impairment is suspected, we also require more funding than has been proposed to train police officers in drug recognition techniques.