



## **New report underscores the need for Canadian substance abuse policy to be based on empirical evidence, examines choices for future policy development**

OTTAWA/April 13, 2005/CNW: The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), Canada's national addictions agency, today released *Substance Abuse in Canada: Current Challenges and Choices*. The report, a collaboration between CCSA and a team of addiction experts working in Canada, explores a series of key contemporary issues in substance abuse and the potential policy implications for Canada.

The in-depth 45-page report provides information on six current drug and alcohol problems or themes, examining the impact of each on the health and well-being of Canadians and communicating the "need to know" issues for politicians and other decision-makers.

"This report addresses key substance abuse issues in Canada, many of which are currently on the legislative agenda, such as cannabis reform," said CCSA's Chief Executive Officer Michel Perron. "CCSA hopes this report will underscore the need for policy to be based on empirical evidence, and will open the door for greater discussion of these issues, both with government and the public."

The six themes presented in the report are:

- **New directions in alcohol policy** – This chapter explores the contemporary shift in alcohol policy from prevention measures based on convincing all Canadians to drink less to strategies that target the harm associated with problematic drinking.
- **Harm reduction** – This chapter examines the application of harm reduction measures to a broad range of problems related to substance abuse.
- **Drugs and driving** – This chapter looks at the emerging policy challenges around drug use and driving and argues that little of what we know about drinking and driving can be applied directly to understanding and addressing this complex issue.
- **Availability and use of evidence-based treatment** – This chapter points to the gap between research and practice in the treatment of substance abuse and considers some of the obstacles that may stand in the way of adopting more evidence-based approaches.
- **Abuse of prescription drugs** – This chapter highlights some of the reasons why prescription drug abuse exists, the ways in which pharmaceutical products are diverted for non-medical purposes, and how Canada can do a better job of dealing with the problem.

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### **Centre canadien de lutte contre l'alcoolisme et les toxicomanies**

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- **Alternative sanctions for cannabis use and possession** – This chapter briefly traces the history of cannabis control in Canada since the 1960s and looks at how a proposed system of fines for simple possession puts Canada back in step with most western democracies.

The full report, *Substance Abuse in Canada: Current Challenges and Choices*, is available at <http://www.ccsa.ca>.

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*About CCSA* – <http://www.ccsa.ca>

CCSA is Canada's national addictions agency. It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1988 to provide a national focus for efforts to reduce the health, social and economic harm associated with substance abuse and addictions.

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