

What is it?

Launched in 1987, Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to addressing the harmful use of substances. Canada's Drug Strategy seeks to ensure that Canadians can live in a society increasingly free of the harms associated with problematic substance use. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.

The harmful use of legal substances, such as alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs, and illegal substances, such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin and ecstasy, have serious, negative consequences for all Canadians. Substance abuse is a multi-faceted, well-entrenched health and social issue that affects Canadians of all ages and in all walks of life.

In 1992, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse estimated the costs of harmful substance use in Canada – to our productivity, to law enforcement, to health care and others – at \$9 billion a year. At the time, this was considered a conservative estimate, and it is certain that these costs have risen significantly since then. Such numbers do not include the costs that cannot be measured – the devastating impact the harmful use of substances can have on families, and the damage to the safety of our homes and communities.

Renewing Canada's Drug Strategy

In May of 2003, the Government of Canada announced the renewal of Canada's Drug Strategy with new investment funding for ongoing measures to address the harmful use of substances.

The renewed Drug Strategy builds on the four key pillars established in 1987:

- **prevention** – measures to prevent problematic use of alcohol, other drugs and substances through education to help people make informed, healthy choices;

- **treatment** – activities for those who have developed an unhealthy dependency on legal or illegal substances;
- **enforcement** – measures that halt the unlawful import, export, production, distribution and possession of controlled substances, and the seizure and forfeiture of assets gained through the drug trade; and
- **harm reduction** – measures to limit possible secondary effects of substance use, such as the spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Each pillar of Canada's Drug Strategy supports a number of key activities. The *prevention* pillar supports activities such as promotion and public education for youth and the general public. Funding is also provided for community-based initiatives to prevent substance use and abuse. The *treatment* pillar supports a range of treatment-focused activities for offenders, Aboriginal communities, women, youth, and others. Treatment options supported by this pillar include alternatives to the justice system, such as Drug Treatment Courts. The *enforcement* pillar supports and encourages collaboration amongst Canada's Drug Strategy's partners to enhance the federal response to emerging issues, such as marijuana grow operations and the production of illegal drugs in clandestine laboratories. The *harm reduction* pillar supports community-based projects aimed at limiting the secondary effects or harms associated with alcohol, other drugs and substances.

In renewing Canada's Drug Strategy, the Government of Canada has reinforced the strong, balanced foundation provided by the four pillars, and broadened its commitment by increasing investment in four areas of activity:

- **leadership** – to ensure coordination, consultation and accountability among partners in the Strategy;
- **research and monitoring** – to better understand substance abuse problems in Canada, and ensure effective decision-making;



- **partnerships and intervention** – to support community-based education and prevention initiatives; to discourage and treat the harmful use of substances, especially among youth; and to address marihuana grow operations and clandestine laboratories used to manufacture illegal substances; and
- **modernized legislation and policy** – to reflect the current views of Canadians particularly toward cannabis.

Action and Accountability

On behalf of the Government of Canada, Health Canada provides national leadership for Canada's Drug Strategy. This is undertaken in partnership with the Department of Justice Canada, Foreign Affairs Canada, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, Correctional Services Canada, Canada Border Services Agency, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and a number of other federal departments and agencies. Provincial, territorial and municipal governments' and other stakeholders' ongoing support and partnership are also essential to success.

Progress will be reported to Canadians every two years, including specific information on key objectives: decreasing the prevalence of harmful drug use; increasing the age at which young Canadians begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol; decreasing the incidence of communicable diseases related to substance abuse; decreasing the supply of illegal drugs; and, decreasing avoidable health, social and economic costs associated with substance abuse.

To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy, please visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds

Find out what governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partners are doing – National Framework for Action – Visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa