



Centre  
for Addiction and  
Mental Health  
Centre de  
toxicomanie et  
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## **CAMH Response to the Report from the House of Commons Committee on the Non-Medical Use of Drugs**

**December 12, 2002**

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) supports the overall directions of the report released by the House of Commons Committee on the Non-Medical Use of Drugs. CAMH is particularly pleased that the Committee has recognized that addictions and substance use are critical health issues requiring a health care response.

Now that Committees of both the House of Commons and the Senate have reported on substance use issues, CAMH urges the federal government to take action on areas where there is agreement and to work with other levels of government and the addictions sector to ensure a new and integrated Canadian Drug Strategy is implemented. This is critical given the tremendous economic and social cost of addictions in our society.

CAMH is pleased the Committee recommended a new, integrated, and coordinated Canadian Drug Strategy that defines the roles and responsibilities of various levels of government and various ministries. CAMH agrees strongly that Health Canada must have a leadership role in developing and coordinating a national drug strategy within a health care context based upon the four “pillars” – treatment, harm reduction, prevention and enforcement.

CAMH is pleased that the Committee has recognized that more funding for treatment and for a broader continuum of treatment options is needed. CAMH agrees that a greater focus on prevention, public health initiatives, more timely treatment, and services that are sensitive to socio-economic, gender and cultural diversity are essential to be able to address addiction issues in Canada.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health agrees with the Committee that more research in the area of addiction and substance abuse is needed to ensure that policies are based on scientific evidence and experience.

The Centre was also pleased that the Committee recommended permanent funding and expansion of Drug Courts based on positive evaluation outcomes.

[CAMH Response to Recommendation to Decriminalize Cannabis Possession and Cultivation of 30 grams or less](#)

Although the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health discourages cannabis use, we support the call to lessen criminal sanctions for cannabis possession for personal use. We have taken this position based on the best available research and knowledge gained from experience in other jurisdictions. This research has led us to conclude that the current criminal sanctions for marijuana possession are an inappropriate control mechanism.

CAMH recommends implementing a more appropriate legal control framework for cannabis use that is more effective and efficient, produces fewer negative social and individual consequences and maintains public health and safety.

CAMH recommends that any alternative legal framework that may be developed be accompanied by careful monitoring to evaluate its impact and inform future policy discussions. An appropriate level of funding should also be provided and maintained for prevention and treatment programs to minimize the prevalence of cannabis use and its associated harms.

*Website Links to related CAMH positions/papers:*

- CAMH and Harm Reduction: A Background Paper on its Meaning and Applications For Substance Use Issues
- Position on the Legal Sanctions Related to Cannabis Possession/Use
- Presentation to the Senate Committee