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Countering Substance Abuse

Activities of
the Solicitor
General Portfolio

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"Replacement"

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Countering Substance Abuse

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Activities of the Solicitor General Portfolio



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Introduction

The abuse of alcohol and other drugs causes an immense amount of harm to individual Canadians, their families and Canadian society in general. The Government of Canada works to reduce this harm through a broad range of activities. Many of these activities are the responsibility of members of the Solicitor General Portfolio.

This booklet provides an overview and examples of what Solicitor General Portfolio members are doing to counter substance abuse. It also describes the mechanisms in place to ensure the Portfolio's activities are integrated with those of the many other departments, agencies and organizations involved in combating this complex societal problem.

For more information, contact:

Policing and Law Enforcement Directorate
Solicitor General Canada
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0P8

or visit the following websites:

Department of the Solicitor General	http://www.sgc.gc.ca/
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/
Correctional Service of Canada	http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/
National Parole Board	http://www.npb-cnlc.gc.ca/

Countering Substance Abuse

Countering substance abuse in Canada

Substance abuse affects all Canadians

The harm suffered by Canadians as a result of the abuse of alcohol and other drugs is evident everywhere. Illness and death are caused by overdoses. Families are left dysfunctional or destroyed. Court systems and prisons are burdened with drug traffickers and those who commit crimes to fund their addictions. Innocent people are maimed or killed by impaired drivers.

There are also other, less visible, consequences of substance abuse. Alcoholism and drug addiction place additional strains on Canada's health care and social service systems. Policing and prison costs have to be borne by taxpayers. The movement of drugs across Canada's borders threatens border security and creates tension in Canada's relationships with other countries. Control of the drug trade by organized crime generates huge profits that are used to finance other illegal activities or that are laundered and invested in legitimate businesses.

Because substance abuse is such a pervasive and multi-faceted problem, efforts to counter it are undertaken by governments at all levels as well as health care professionals, social workers, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, teachers, employers and families.

The Government of Canada's approach

Countering the harm caused by substance abuse is a key priority of the Government of Canada, a priority that is linked to other major government priorities including improving the health and well-being of Canadians, fighting organized crime, and making Canada's communities safe and secure.

Through *Canada's Drug Strategy*, the government commits significant financial and human resources to the challenge every year, working on behalf of Canadians to address substance abuse issues, to help treat those who abuse drugs and alcohol, and to enforce

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the country's drug laws. Overall, the government's strategy is intended to provide a balance of measures to **reduce the supply** of illicit substances and **reduce the demand** for them.

The Government of Canada's drug strategy is led by Health Canada, which focuses on the health aspects of the problem and coordinates the activities of other federal departments and agencies. Other federal organizations contribute based on their mandates. For example, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency helps detect and stop the entry of illegal drugs into Canada, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade works with multilateral organizations dedicated to substance abuse work.

A key role in Canada's Drug Strategy is played by members of the Solicitor General Portfolio.

The Solicitor General Portfolio

A portfolio is a department and a group of agencies reporting to a single Cabinet Minister. The Solicitor General Portfolio comprises the Department of the Solicitor General Canada and four agencies, all of which report to the Solicitor General. The Portfolio is responsible for protecting Canadians and helping to maintain Canada as a peaceful and safe society.

The **Department's** role within the Portfolio is to support the Solicitor General in giving effective direction to the four agencies. The agencies are the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (**RCMP**), the Correctional Service of Canada (**CSC**), the National Parole Board (**NPB**), and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (**CSIS**).

The RCMP, CSC and NPB are directly involved in Canada's Drug Strategy, and their activities along with those of the Department are the focus of this publication.

The Portfolio's strategic approach

Scope of activities

The Solicitor General Portfolio supports the government's drug strategy with activities across the range of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement:

- It is much better for the individuals involved – and more cost effective for society – to **prevent** substance abuse in the first place than to have to treat it. Substance abuse can be prevented by educating people about the dangers, and by helping them to adopt healthy behaviours.
- **Harm reduction** measures are intended to limit the secondary effects of substance abuse, such as the spread of HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis C through the sharing of contaminated needles used for injecting drugs.
- **Treatment** activities are directed at those who have developed an unhealthy dependency on legal or illegal substances.
- **Enforcement** involves halting the unlawful import, export, production, distribution and possession of controlled substances, and the seizure and forfeiture of assets gained through the drug trade.

Within the Portfolio, the primary responsibility for investigating drug offenses rests with the RCMP, through its Drug Branch. However, the Force is also very involved in efforts to discourage people from abusing drugs, through its Drug Awareness Service and its National Youth Strategy.

Substance abuse is a major problem among Canada's offender population, and the **CSC** has extensive programs in place to address this problem.

The **NPB**, working closely with the **CSC**, makes decisions about the timing and conditions of release of offenders into the community. These decisions take into account the nature and severity of any substance abuse problem, and whether there is a direct link between

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a substance abuse problem and a person's criminal history. Release conditions can include abuse-related measures, such as a requirement that an offender abstain from alcohol or follow a treatment program.

Three directorates of the **Department** are involved in addressing substance abuse matters:

- The Corrections Directorate provides policy advice to the Solicitor General on substance abuse issues involving institutional and community programming for offenders.
- The Policing and Law Enforcement Directorate works with officials from other departments and with police organizations and NGOs in the development and implementation of drug policy and regulations. It also supports work in international fora, including the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the G8.
- The Aboriginal Policing Directorate partners with First Nations and provincial and territorial governments to undertake policy, research and program development work on issues related to aboriginal policing, including substance abuse.

The Portfolio members act in support of the National Drug Strategy developed under the leadership of Health Canada. What links Portfolio initiatives together is one central goal – to make Canada a safer place by addressing the serious challenge of substance abuse.

Portfolio substance abuse initiatives

Solicitor General Portfolio members deliver substance abuse programs within their mandates and address substance abuse issues as part of their ongoing responsibilities.

This section describes the members' initiatives under the four approaches to countering substance abuse: prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement.

Prevention

Community initiatives

Members of the RCMP witness daily the devastation caused by drug abuse. They are well placed to warn Canadians about the perils of substance abuse. Through its \$4 million *Drug Awareness Service*, the RCMP goes into the community to educate students, parents, athletes, coaches, employees and employers. Its prevention efforts are research-led.

The RCMP's partners at the national level include other Portfolio members, Health Canada, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, the Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership Network, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the First Nations Chiefs of Police. At the regional level, partners include local addiction agencies, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Manitoba Addictions Foundation, other police services, school boards, and the private sector.

Through the Drug Awareness Service, the RCMP conducts more than 10,000 presentations a year. The premier teaching vehicle, the *Drug Abuse Resistance Education* (DARE) program developed by DARE International, is used to reach students in the classroom. In 2001, about 760 instructors – three-quarters of them RCMP volunteer members – brought DARE to 65,000 students in more than 2,000 Canadian schools.

The *Aboriginal Shield Program*, developed with the Nechi Institute in Alberta, has trained police officers, peacekeepers, elders,

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teachers and community health care workers across the country to raise awareness among students of substance abuse issues. The Akwasasne Mohawk community has inserted the program directly into its school curriculum. A similar program, *Substance Abuse Strategy & Solutions for the Yukon* or SASSY, was developed with local education, health and community representatives in the Yukon to meet the particular needs of indigenous people there.

Parents learn about drugs through an innovative program, *Two-Way Street: Parents, Kids and Drugs* (developed in partnership with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Addiction Commission). The RCMP's *Drugs and the Workplace* initiative informs parents and young working adults about substance abuse, with the aim of preventing abuse rather than countering it through enforcement activities and drug testing in the workplace.

Abuse of performance-enhancing drugs led to the development by the RCMP of the *Drugs and Sport Program*, in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, Sports Canada, the BC Sports Medicine Council, and Montreal's Sports Drug Testing Laboratory. Launched in Quebec for midget hockey, the program will be expanded to other provinces and territories.

The RCMP has identified youth as a strategic priority, and its National Youth Strategy includes youth engagement as a key component. In this context, the RCMP hosts a "by youth – for youth" website, www.deal.org, that links young people to their peers and provides information and discussion venues to encourage youth to make healthy lifestyle choices. The site contains information about drugs and substance abuse, as well as other issues that may arise among young people.

Apart from the RCMP's many prevention initiatives, the Department's Aboriginal Policing Directorate funds many youth diversional projects that indirectly relate to the prevention of substance abuse. The goal of these projects is to build a positive youth-police relationship, diminish the negative stereotyping of police, and provide healthy lifestyle activities that promote youth self-esteem.

The Directorate also contributes to a program called *Reality Check for Indigenous People*. The Vancouver Police and the Vancouver Police Native Liaison Society bring Aboriginal youth-at-risk

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together to show them the realities of the “skid row” section of downtown Vancouver. The youth see the perils of substance abuse and the benefits of making positive life choices.

Programs for offenders

Corrections officials estimate that about 70 percent of offenders have substance abuse problems that require treatment. To try to prevent future problems from substance abuse, all newcomers to federal institutions must participate in the *Reception Awareness Program*, which provides an introduction to infectious diseases, high risk behaviours in prison, available programs and other sources of assistance.

CSC has also developed two pamphlets related to substance abuse prevention: *Go Home Healthy* (about infectious diseases in general) and *Hepatitis C Inside the Walls*. CSC also uses two comic books that were developed in the Quebec Region to address HIV issues: *Red Alert* and *From Darkness to Light*. All these materials talk about the risk of transmission of infectious disease from injection drug use.

Harm reduction

The Correctional Service also offers offenders with substance abuse problems a number of programs aimed at helping reduce the harm those problems can create. For example, inmates can be tested for infectious diseases on admission or at any time during their incarceration. This testing is accompanied by counseling to underline harm reduction messages and ensure inmates understand the test results. A pilot project in one institution allows inmates to be tested anonymously for HIV, Hepatitis B or C, or sexually transmitted diseases – the results are not shared with prison authorities unless the inmate wants to do so.

All inmates are offered immunization for Hepatitis B on admission. Those who are Hepatitis C positive are offered immunization for Hepatitis A. There is no immunization for Hepatitis C. To help prevent the spread of disease, CSC provides bleach for injection drug users to clean shared needles and syringes, and distributes condoms, lubricant and dental dams.

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Under the *Peer Education Program*, inmate volunteers are provided with information on high risk behaviours and infectious diseases. These volunteers then help educate other inmates, and tell them where to get more information. Special modules address the needs of women and Aboriginal offenders.

CSC's efforts to deal with infectious diseases contribute not only to the welfare of offenders but also to public safety. The vast majority of offenders return to their families and communities. By minimizing the transmission of infectious diseases in prisons, CSC is helping prevent their spread outside.

Suicide prevention

Youth suicide is often associated with substance abuse. The RCMP supported the development of *Whitestone*, a new youth suicide prevention program offered to communities at high risk. This program helps train young people who are working with their peers at the community level.

Treatment

For the most part, treatment for substance abuse is provided by agencies other than the members of the Solicitor General Portfolio. However, CSC provides several treatment programs for the significant number of offenders who have substance abuse problems. As required by law, the Service provides offenders a level of treatment that is in keeping with community standards.

Three programs for male offenders – the *Offender Substance Abuse Prevention Program*, the *CHOICES Program*, and the *Substance Abuse Program for Long-Term Offenders* – were accredited by an international panel of experts in 1998. In addition, new programs are being developed to address the specific needs of women and Aboriginal offenders.

For inmates who want to remain free of alcohol and drugs, CSC has introduced *Intensive Support Units* in all maximum, medium and minimum male institutions. These units provide a more structured living environment, including added searching and drug testing, to reinforce offender efforts to change substance abuse behaviour. Similar units are planned for all women's facilities in 2002-2003.

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In 2001, the CSC piloted the new *High Intensity Substance Abuse Program* for federal offenders with the most severe substance abuse problems. Developed by a team of regional CSC substance abuse experts, the program is slated for national implementation in 2002-2003.

Inmates who are HIV or Hepatitis C positive can be started on treatment if a medical assessment indicates this is the best way to address the infection. Inmates who are accidentally exposed to a potentially contaminated body fluid are referred to the institutional physician for possible treatment.

Methadone maintenance treatment is used to stabilize the behaviour of people addicted to opiates by providing methadone, a legally available drug, as a substitute for opiates. Part of a multi-disciplinary approach to opiate addiction, methadone does not produce a high, but it reduces withdrawal symptoms. CSC is expanding the provision of this treatment to eligible inmates.

At discharge, inmates receiving complex medical treatments such as methadone maintenance, HIV or Hepatitis C treatment are linked with community support systems. CSC supplies medication to ensure treatment is not interrupted during the transition, books appointments with community physicians, and arranges with local pharmacies for the administration of methadone.

CSC and the John Howard Society of Moncton developed a program called *Managing Addictions in the Community* to meet the needs of seriously addicted offenders released into the Moncton area. The program coordinates the activities of community agencies and builds community understanding of the needs of released offenders.

In Ottawa, Solicitor General Canada's Corrections Directorate is participating in the development of a Drug Treatment Court for the city, patterned on similar courts in Toronto and Vancouver. Under this initiative, non-violent offenders who are addicted to cocaine or opiates will enter a judicially supervised treatment program as an alternative to incarceration. The goal is to reduce the number of crimes committed to support a drug dependency by reducing drug addiction. Partners include federal and provincial

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justice officials, the RCMP and Ottawa police, the Defence Counsel Association, and several Ottawa substance abuse treatment agencies. The Department supported the Drug Treatment court in Toronto.

Enforcement

In Canada, substance abuse is recognized as primarily a health issue. However, Drug Strategy experts believe efforts to reduce the harm caused by drugs would be hampered by an environment of unrestricted supply. Enforcement activities help maintain control over drug availability, and are complementary to prevention and treatment.

The focus of enforcement efforts in Canada is on the high-level criminals that supply illicit drugs, rather than on individual users. For these users, the emphasis is on prevention and treatment.

Organized crime

Producing and supplying illicit drugs is the major source of revenue for most organized crime groups. The RCMP has placed a priority on investigating criminal organizations involved in the drug trade in Canada. Through its *Federal Drug Enforcement Program*, the RCMP has extensive capabilities in the areas of source development and handling, undercover operations, witness protection, and new investigative techniques, taking full advantage of technological advances. It works closely with other national and international law enforcement agencies to reduce the supply of drugs available on Canada's streets. Its enforcement efforts are intelligence-led.

Chemical precursors

The RCMP investigates clandestine laboratories involved in the production of illicit drugs. Producers of these drugs use chemicals to manufacture their products. The RCMP works with representatives of chemical companies to identify and intercept suspicious transactions involving these chemicals.

Together with the Department, the RCMP contributed to the development of regulatory controls on the production and movement of chemical precursors that Health Canada has proposed to implement in 2003.

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Training

The RCMP is working with the Australian Federal Police and the Chinese National Police to develop a training program that will allow investigators from the three jurisdictions to carry out controlled deliveries of illicit drugs as a means of investigating high-level drug distributors.

The First Nations Chiefs of Police Association, with funding from the Aboriginal Policing Directorate, conducts for First Nations police an annual Family Violence course that includes a substance abuse recognition program.

Drugs in prisons

With prison populations so highly engaged in the drug culture, keeping drugs out of prisons is a significant challenge. The Correctional Service uses a number of enforcement measures to combat the supply of drugs in federal institutions. It conducts searches, monitors areas where the potential for smuggling drugs into an institution is high, and works with police to share intelligence about drug issues.

In 2001, CSC introduced ion scanners into every institution to help detect the introduction of drugs, and by September 2003 it expects to have a drug detection dog in every institution. Urinalysis is used to detect and deter substance abuse by offenders.

Research and Development

The fact that substance abuse has been a major social problem for many decades demonstrates that there are no easy answers to addressing the problem. The Solicitor General Portfolio therefore conducts extensive research, in collaboration with its partners, to improve understanding of the size and changing nature of the challenge and to develop new or improved projects and programs to counter substance abuse.

Canada enjoys a reputation among its international partners as a leader in the field of addictions research and program development in the correctional context. CSC has established an international program accreditation process, and the accredited substance abuse programs it has developed have shown results.

The CSC made a major commitment to research in 2001 with the opening of its Addictions Research Centre in Montague, Prince Edward Island. With annual funding of \$2 million, the Centre carries out all research and program development in substance abuse for the CSC.

For example, it has developed a new computerized assessment system for measuring the severity of offender substance abuse problems. The system provides data on the types of substances used and the association between criminal behaviour and substance abuse. The Centre is also developing a program to meet the specific needs of women offenders, designed to provide a continuum of care from admission to end of sentence. An international advisory panel is providing input to ensure the program meets the highest standards of effectiveness and integrity.

Also under development is a treatment program for Aboriginal offenders, who account for about 17 percent of the incarcerated offender population. Members of the Aboriginal community are developing the program with the Addictions Research Centre.

One Centre project is studying the incidence among offenders of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects (FAS/FAE), while another is identifying the percentage of offenders suffering from both mental health and addiction problems. The results will be used to develop programming to most effectively meet the special needs of these offenders.

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The Centre is developing linkages with other government departments and agencies, other levels of government, and universities to encourage joint research efforts and to share knowledge and best practices. For example, a *Visiting Experts Program*, which will allow up to four outside researchers to work at the Centre, will provide opportunities for cooperative research projects.

In the spring of 2002, the Centre hosted an *International Experts Forum* at which approximately 160 researchers and operational managers from 12 countries discussed national approaches and established priorities for treatment and research in addictions and substance abuse in corrections. This priority setting exercise is the first step in a five-year plan to coordinate international efforts to reduce the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol on the lives of offenders and in their communities.

Other members of the Portfolio also conduct or commission research to better understand substance abuse. The RCMP, for example, under a *National Program on Chemical Drugs*, analyzes the contents of pills seized across the country so each region can be aware of what is being sold on its streets. This information is used to help train first responders (police, fire, ambulance) regarding chemical drugs, which have become increasingly popular among young people at raves and after-hours bars.

The Department of the Solicitor General has helped fund the development of a compendium of police practices in substance abuse and harm reduction efforts, including police involvement in school and community awareness and educational programs, alternative measures and diversion programs, and police protocols for relationships with harm reduction initiatives.

The Department has also financially supported the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' *Drug Strategy Project*, under which the FCM is helping nine pilot municipalities develop their own municipal drug strategies. It has also contributed to a study (the *Attributable Fractions Study*) by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse aimed at estimating the strength of the associations between-different types of crimes and the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs, and the share of crimes in Canada that can be attributed to the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Evaluation

The Solicitor General Portfolio attempts to determine if its major initiatives achieve the objectives established for them. It does this by conducting or commissioning evaluation studies of key programs. Pilot projects are often used to evaluate new programs before resources are committed for full implementation. Increasingly, evaluation components are built into initiatives when they are designed.

For example, the CSC's Addictions Research Centre (ARC) will monitor the impact of the new *High Intensity Substance Abuse Program* on offenders, determine its effect on their release, and continue to monitor changes in substance abuse behaviour into the community. Similarly, the ARC is monitoring the new Intensive Support Units to ensure they meet the needs of offenders and help them reintegrate effectively. Post-release follow-up is planned to determine the full impact of the units.

As the CSC's methadone maintenance treatment program is expanded, the ARC will study the program's institutional impact, and its impact on offender behaviour in the community, including its effect on crime and on requirements for other community services.

Where evaluations suggest that programs are not meeting their objectives, the CSC acts to improve them. For example, national substance abuse programs for women are being revised to better meet the needs of this population.

DARE, one of the key programs of the RCMP Drug Awareness Service, has been evaluated numerous times over the years, primarily in the United States. The Officer in Charge of the RCMP's National Youth Strategy is currently a member of the National Crime Prevention Centre's Evaluation Advisory Committee for DARE, which is examining the effectiveness of the program in three Canadian provinces.

Initiatives funded through the government's Organized Crime strategy are evaluated according to a Result-Based Accountability Framework that was established for the strategy. Examples include the RCMP's community policing seminar with CICAD, and its controlled deliveries training with Australian and Chinese police.

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CICAD's Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism

The Department of the Solicitor General played a leadership role in the development of the *Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism* (MEM), an instrument to evaluate the individual and collective drug control efforts of member states of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (known by the Spanish acronym CICAD). The MEM evaluates five main areas: national plans and strategies, prevention and treatment, reduction of drug production, law enforcement measures, and the cost of the drug problem.

CICAD completed the MEM in 1999, and carried out the first round of evaluation in 2000. The results were reported to hemispheric leaders at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, where leaders reiterated their commitment to this mechanism to help address the global drug problem.

CICAD evaluated member states' efforts to implement the recommendations from this exercise, and published the results in January 2002. This first evaluation cycle helped to establish a baseline of hemispheric drug control efforts using a common set of indicators against which future progress could be measured.

Building on this success, an inter-governmental working group chaired by Canada's Senior Assistant Deputy Solicitor General revised and expanded the indicators to capture data on how other forms of criminal behaviour affect the drug trade. The second evaluation round using the refined MEM commenced in November 2001 and will be completed in December 2003.

Integration and coordination

With so many individuals and organizations involved – not only within the Portfolio but throughout the Government of Canada and across the country and internationally – coordination and integration of efforts is essential to prevent duplication, to ensure that activities are mutually supportive, and to share lessons learned and best practices.

National level activities

In Canada, Portfolio members participate in and support many organizations, working groups and committees charged with integrating and coordinating the substance abuse activities of government departments and agencies, other levels of government, police organizations, and non-governmental organizations. These include the Working Group on Substance Abuse, chaired by Health Canada; the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police sub-committee on drugs; the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports; and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The Deputy Solicitor General and the Deputy Minister of Health are both ex-officio members of the Board of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), and Portfolio members play an active role on the committees and national networks managed by the CCSA:

- The CCSA's *Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership Network* brings together key players from the health, education and enforcement fields, as well as social services, corrections, justice and other specialists, to encourage collaborative initiatives.
- The *Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use* project involves federal, provincial, and community agencies. Its primary goal is to coordinate and facilitate the collection, organization, and dissemination of qualitative and quantitative information on drug use.

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At the operational level, there is close cooperation between the RCMP and other enforcement agencies. In British Columbia, for example, Proceeds of Crime units bring together RCMP, provincial and municipal police, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), the federal Department of Justice, Public Works and Government Services Canada and the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia to investigate money laundering and proceeds of crime offences related to drugs.

The Department of the Solicitor General plays a central role in coordinating and integrating the Portfolio's substance abuse activities with linked initiatives, such as measures to combat organized crime and ensure public safety.

For example, the Deputy Solicitor General co-chairs the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Deputy Minister Steering Committee on Organized Crime. The Senior Assistant Deputy Solicitor General chairs the National Coordinating Committee on Organized Crime, and the Interdepartmental Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers on Public Safety.

In addition, there are strong linkages between the Portfolio's efforts to counter substance abuse and the *National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention*, which the Solicitor General co-chairs with the Minister of Justice. Through this Strategy, the Government has committed to contributing to a sustained reduction in crime by providing communities with the knowledge, tools, and support required to address the root causes of crime and victimization. Since its launch in 1998, the National Strategy has funded over 150 substance abuse-related projects in communities across the country.

One of the innovative projects funded by the Strategy is the *Chemical Drugs and Raves Program*. Aimed at developing national training on chemical drugs and related events, such as rave parties and after-hour bars, the program will be directed at first responders (police, fire, ambulance, emergency medical attendants) with a component on community mobilization to enable the first responders to take this knowledge into their communities to educate others, including youth, parents and teachers. This training is intended to benefit the community as a whole.

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International initiatives

At the international level, the Senior Assistant Deputy Solicitor General is Canada's principal delegate to the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), the drug control body of the Organization of American States.

The Canada-US Cross Border Crime Forum brings together officials from all levels of government in Canada and the US to discuss transnational crime problems, including drug matters. Co-chaired by the Senior Assistant Deputy Solicitor General and a senior US Department of Justice official, the Forum produced a *United States – Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment* in 2002 to support the development of coordinated regional approaches to countering the cross-border drug trade.

The increasingly globalized nature of crime makes international coordination and integration essential for enforcement activities. On a case by case basis or for extended periods, the RCMP often participate in Joint Forces Operations to cooperatively investigate criminal activity and exchange intelligence and information.

An excellent example of ongoing integration is the Integrated Border Enforcement Team, developed in 1997 to address cross-border crimes along the international land and marine border between British Columbia and Washington State. It includes officials from the US Border Patrol, US Department of Justice, US Customs, RCMP, CCRA, and several local and state law enforcement agencies. The team coordinates activities and pools resources, expertise and intelligence. It has seized an average of \$1 million a month in illegal drugs, liquor, weapons, tobacco, and vehicles. Following the success of this west coast initiative, similar teams have been established for other areas of the border.

Another successful innovation in drug enforcement is the Combined Forces Enforcement Units in Ontario. Here, representatives of the RCMP, provincial and municipal police forces, CCRA, and US law enforcement agencies work together regularly to investigate major organized crime groups.

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Farther afield, the RCMP assisted CICAD to organize a workshop for representatives of drug transit and drug producing countries in the hemisphere that are interested in the RCMP's community policing model. The next phase of this initiative is a pilot project that will be used to introduce the model in one country. Similarly, the RCMP Drug Awareness Service has introduced a demand reduction model to Caribbean countries through CICAD.

The Department of the Solicitor General also supports CICAD initiatives by contributing funds each year to support demand and supply reduction measures and to evaluate national and hemispheric drug control efforts. This funding supplements the substantial contribution to CICAD provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Looking ahead

Achieving progress in combating substance abuse remains a difficult challenge. According to the first MEM report on the drug phenomenon in the hemisphere, consumption is on the rise, the average age of consumption has dropped, new drugs are emerging, and existing drugs are increasingly available and increasingly pure. Criminal organizations have grown more sophisticated and powerful, with financial resources and weapons that governments lack the capacity to control.

Across the Canada – US border, drug trafficking continues to be a problem, according to the *United States – Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment*. The study concluded that this trafficking is driven by demand for illegal drugs in both countries, the potential for profit from trafficking, and the perceived low threat of detection.

In Canada, there are both encouraging and discouraging signs. A 1999 Ontario student survey showed a substantial upswing in drug use among Ontario students since 1993. Students were also less likely to recognize the risk of harm from drug use, and to disapprove of drug use. From 1991 to 1999, those who said cannabis was easy to obtain increased from 29 percent to 53 percent.

On the other hand, a 1999 evaluation of the CSC's *Offender Substance Abuse Prevention Program* indicated participants had a 13 percent reduction in re-admissions, a 29 percent reduction in new convictions, and a 53 percent reduction in violent offences in the year following release. An evaluation of the CHOICES Program showed a 29 percent reduction in re-admissions, and a 56 percent reduction in re-convictions, with a 50 percent reduction in re-admission for severe substance abusers.

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Through the initiatives described in this booklet, the members of the Solicitor General Portfolio are contributing substantially to substance abuse prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement, as they act to fulfil their public safety mandate. They are also increasingly working together and with others to improve their results. A key objective for the future is to meld the individual initiatives of the RCMP, CSC, NPB and the Department into a comprehensive Portfolio substance abuse strategy based on improved data collection and analysis and evaluated against measurable objectives.

There is still much work to do.

