



Canadian Centre
on Substance Abuse

Centre canadien de lutte contre
l'alcoolisme et les toxicomanies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pan-Canadian strategy to address prescription drug misuse

Ottawa, June 11, 2012 – In response to increased harm associated with prescription drug misuse and addiction in Canada, the [Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse](#) (CCSA) is convening a group of national experts to identify evidence-informed strategies to address this complex issue.

CCSA is joined by the Alberta [Coalition on Prescription Drug Misuse](#) (CoOPDM), led by Dr. Susan Ulan, Co-chair of CoOPDM, and the [Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness](#), led by Carolyn Davison, Director of Addiction Services with the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, in chairing this important initiative. Together, these organizations will oversee the development of a strategy to address illicit and non-medical prescription drug use in Canada, with the participation of multiple stakeholders, including representatives from the federal and provincial governments, regulatory bodies, enforcement communities and industry, as well as researchers, treatment providers and medical, addiction and pain specialists.

"This pan-Canadian strategy will consolidate and build on the many activities underway across the country to address the current prescription drug crisis," said Michel Perron, Chief Executive Officer of CCSA. "We will work with all those involved to put in place a system that strikes the right balance between appropriate therapeutic use of these drugs, while also preventing their misuse."

"A successful strategy requires a comprehensive, collaborative approach that involves all the partners in this issue — including health, education and law enforcement sectors," said Carolyn Davison. "This kind of holistic approach ensures consistency and it will help all provinces and territories follow best practices across the board."

"Prescription drug abuse is a growing concern for many Canadians, and our government is proud to support the CCSA as they play a leading role in developing a national strategy to address the issue," said the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health. "Health Canada officials will be part of this important process, which will ultimately help improve the health and safety of Canadians."

The need for this action was first identified in Canada's [National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada](#). CCSA's proposed pan-Canadian approach was recently supported by stakeholders at the [National Dialogue on Prescription Drug Misuse](#), hosted by CCSA in February 2012.

In recent years, Canadians have become the second largest consumers of prescription opioids, according to the International Narcotics Control Board (2010). Additionally, drug overdoses have risen at an alarming rate from this increased use, with deaths from oxycodone increasing by 416 per cent between 1999 and 2004.

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While prescription opioids are a component of pain treatment, their highly addictive nature increases the potential for illicit use and other related harm. Commonly abused types of prescription drugs include opioid pain relievers, stimulants and sedatives.

Development of Canada's prescription drug misuse strategy will be guided by a newly established National Advisory Council, working with expert advisory committees focused on education, prevention, enforcement and treatment. CCSA will release the strategy in 2013. It will contain evidence-informed recommendations and priorities for action that can be put in place quickly.

The National Advisory Council will also work closely with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of Health Canada, which is currently developing its own strategy. By doing so, efforts at addressing prescription drug misuse can leverage cultural, geographic and Canada-wide experiences and knowledge.

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About CCSA:

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) provides national leadership, develops sustainable partnerships and advances solutions to ensure that all people in Canada live in a healthy society free of alcohol- and other drug-related harm.