



Tories' addiction plan misses mark

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\$64M plan targets drug trade, addiction

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The new national anti-drug strategy announced in the federal budget ignores the impressive body of scientific evidence on the value of investing in harm reduction and alternatives to criminal prosecution for non-violent drug offences. The new strategy funds law enforcement, prevention and treatment programs – three of the four so-called "pillars" common in many drug strategies. But the fourth pillar, harm reduction – which includes needle exchanges, opiate substitution therapy programs and safe-injection facilities – has been eliminated.

Clearly the federal government is looking at drug addiction as a criminal matter rather than a matter of public health. But relying too much on criminal law and its enforcement undermines public-health programs that have proven effective at improving the health of people who use drugs and reducing the spread of infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis C. Vancouver's safe-injection facility is a perfect example.

A recent study published in the *HIV/AIDS Policy and Law Review* confirmed that even under the existing drug strategy, the federal government "continues to invest heavily in policies and practices that have repeatedly been shown in the scientific literature to be ineffective or harmful."

Canada needs a sensible, responsible drug strategy that is based on evidence, respects human rights and improves public health. Instead, the government is giving Canadians a strategy that continues to ignore the wealth of evidence on truly effective and humane responses to drug use and will result in the further worsening of the drug problem in Canada.

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