

## PRESS RELEASE

### **New report from *Canada's Drug Futures Forum* outlines recommendations for the next decade of drug policy in Canada**

*Recommendations from a meeting of over 200 policy-makers, public health officials, law enforcement professionals, researchers, people who use drugs, and community organizers provides an innovative roadmap to improve Canada's policy response to illegal drugs over the coming ten years.*

**Toronto, Canada (July 14, 2017)** — Against the backdrop of a national opioid overdose crisis and the fracturing of the global consensus on criminalization-based drug policies, over 200 participants met in Ottawa at *Canada's Drug Futures Forum* in April 2017 to produce a ten-year agenda for the future of Canadian drug policy. A [new report](#) outlines wide-ranging recommendations from the Forum, and calls for the exploration and implementation of innovative policies to reduce the harms of drugs and drug policy in Canada.

"The regulation of Canada's recreational cannabis market, and a commitment to a growing public health response to the opioid overdose crisis, signal that Canada is now a leader in drug policy innovation," said Dr. Dan Werb, Director of the International Centre for Science in Drug Policy and Chair of the Organizing Committee for the Forum. "The recommendations yielded from *Canada's Drug Futures Forum* build on this work to offer a roadmap for how to continue this drug policy innovation into the next decade."

Available in both English and French, ["Canada's Drug Futures Forum: Summary of Proceedings and Final Recommendations"](#) synthesizes dialogue generated by speakers at the Forum and outlines recommendations from participants on the future of Canadian drug policy. The recommendations reflect predominant themes and areas of convergence in the Forum's presentations and discussions, although not total consensus, and present opportunities to generate policy or amend existing policies in the short-, medium- and long-term across five domains, including

1. National drug policy reform
2. Criminal justice reform
3. Prevention, harm reduction, and treatment
4. Research and knowledge exchange
5. International leadership

"Police professionals and agencies in Canada recognize that more needs to be done to assist people who use drugs in their struggles and challenges," noted Senator Vernon White, who is also a former Chief of Police and Assistant RCMP Commissioner. "The Forum recommendations emphasize the importance of increased levels of medication-assisted therapy, which should be made available for both opioids and other substances. This would help to reduce the criminal elements involved in the drug trade, reduce crimes committed by people who use drugs, and help build recognition of drug dependence as a medical issue to be addressed by medical practitioners."

"Canada's recent moves on cannabis regulation, on supervised drug consumption, and on heroin prescription have provided it with a unique opportunity to establish itself as the global model in progressive and evidence-based drug policy," explained Ann Fordham, Executive Director of the U.K.-based International Drug Policy Consortium. "The recommendation emerging from the Forum

to establish a federal commission to explore regulation across a broader range of substances is a sensible next step given Canada's pioneering work on cannabis policy reform."

A webinar launching the report will be held on Friday, July 14 from 1–2 PM EDT and will include a presentation of report highlights, comments from respondents, and an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and discuss next steps. Those interested can register for the webinar [here](#).

### **About *Canada's Drug Futures Forum***

From April 4–5, 2017, a multidisciplinary team of scholars convened over 200 researchers, policy-makers, public health officials, law enforcement professionals, people who use drugs, and community organizers at [Canada's Drug Futures Forum](#) in Ottawa, on traditional Algonquin territory, to examine the future of Canada's domestic and international drug policies. The Forum featured speakers on four key themes: international control and management, integrating policing and public health, decriminalization and regulation, and strategies for health and social equity in drug policies. Participants joined facilitated working groups to generate policy recommendations, which have been consolidated in the report released today with the aim of adding details and caveats for clarity and accessibility while retaining the themes and spirit of the discussion. The recommendations presented in the report reflect areas of convergence but do not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

*Canada's Drug Futures Forum* is supported by the International Centre for Science in Drug Policy, British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Canadian Public Health Association, Carleton University Faculty of Public Affairs, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Ottawa Global Strategy Lab and Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation.

### **For more information or to arrange a media interview, please contact**

Nazlee Maghsoudi

Knowledge Translation Manager, International Centre for Science in Drug Policy

+1 (858) 205-8262

candrugforum [at] gmail.com

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