



NEWS RELEASE

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BCCLA REJECTS NEW DRUG WAR STRATEGY

The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association spoke out today in opposition to the federal government's new approach to drugs. While additional funding for treatment is certainly needed, a close examination of the new strategy reveals significant cause for concern.

The introduction of mandatory minimum sentences for so-called "serious drug crimes" poses a significant threat to civil liberties. This approach, used for more than a decade in the United States, has led to the imposition of unjust prison sentences for non-violent drug offenders while utterly failing to reduce either the supply or demand for drugs.

It also strips away an important factor in sentencing; the ability of the judge to assess the entire picture when determining what sentence is appropriate. BCCLA president Jason Gratl: "This scorched earth policy is out of touch with the psychological realities of drug addiction and drug distribution. It's so Richard Nixon."

In addition, the Association is concerned with the government's stated intention to engage in a culture war. Government policy should be based on evidence. And the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that prohibition has been a failure. The government's apparent willingness to disregard the evidence was made crystal clear in Prime Minister Harper's comments about harm reduction and Vancouver's safe injection facility.

"If this government believes that a drug strategy primarily relying on enforcement will work, then it should be willing to prove that to the taxpayers footing the bill. We call on the government to have the Auditor General conduct a comprehensive review of the economic and social costs of drug prohibition in Canada," stated Kirk Tousaw, the Chair of the Association's Drug Policy Committee.

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