

M.2. Reform developments outside of Europe

Canada

Reference

Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Auditor General's report on illicit drugs and Canada's Drug Strategy*, 2001, 26 p.; URL: oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/01menu_e.html

Commentary

In 1992, the government approved Canada's Drug Strategy, a co-ordinated effort to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. The strategy calls for a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for and the supply of drugs through such activities as: control and enforcement, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation and harm reduction. In 1998, Canada's Drug Strategy was renewed.

In 2001, the Office of the Canadian Auditor General did an audit on the federal government's efforts to address illicit drugs in the context of Canada's Drug Strategy. In particular, the audit focussed on high-level issues of leadership and co-ordination, information, objectives, performance measurement, and reporting to Parliament. This contribution is extracted from this 2001 report.

Canada's Drug Strategy can be found on the internet: *Canada's Drug Strategy*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998, 29 p.; URL hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/cds-sca/cds/pdf/englishstrategy.pdf

For a Discussion paper on cannabis of the Senate's Special Committee on Illegal Drugs: The Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs, *Discussion paper on cannabis*, May 2002, 10 p; URL: parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/ille-e/library-e/discussion-e.pdf

Abstract

Since Canada passed its first drug legislation in 1908, legislation has expanded the list of illicit substances and increased federal enforcement powers to combat the problem.

However, despite all the legislation and the resulting changes, there has been a growing acknowledgement by Canadians and parliamentarians that there are limits on the ability of law enforcement to reduce the supply of drugs.

But, since the introduction of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* in 1997, the current legislation for controlling the use of illicit drugs, most of the federal government's changes to legislation relevant to illicit drugs have focussed more

on reducing supply (enforcement) than reducing demand.

However, Canada's Drug Strategy is based on four important pillars: prevention, enforcement and control, treatment and rehabilitation, and harm reduction. While substance abuse is a health and social problem, there are links to drug trafficking, money laundering, organized crime, and terrorism. Because of the primary health concern, the lead for Canada's Drug Strategy resides with Health Canada.