
THE PROVINCIAL NEWS
THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF BC
SEPTEMBER, 1999

#3-481 HEAD ST.
VICTORIA, BC
V9A 5S1

TEL:250-361-1551
FAX:250-361-4383
[**wbjhsbc@islandnet.com**](mailto:wbjhsbc@islandnet.com)

SUBSTANCE USE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE
POLICY STATEMENT SUMMARY

The use, possession and trafficking of illicit drugs has become a serious problem for Canadian Society. Governments spend enormous amounts of money for police, the court system and the correctional system to combat drug related problems. There is an increase in the availability of illicit drugs and government measures to prevent their spread have been ineffective.

PREVENTION EDUCATION

The John Howard Society supports the promotion of increased efforts in prevention education focusing on children, parents, teachers, other caregivers and the media. This education should demonstrate the harmful risks associated with using drugs as well as the reasons why we use and abuse alcohol and drugs. Self esteem, role models and related socio/economic conditions should be factored into all education prevention programs. The Society recommends increased funding for alcohol and drug abuse prevention education.

HARM REDUCTION

“Harm Reduction” is a public-health approach to dealing with drug-related issues that places first priority on reducing the negative consequences of drug use rather than on eliminating drug use or ensuring abstinence. A primary catalyst for the discussion of this approach has been the emergence of HIV/AIDS and deaths linked to

drug use through the sharing of injection equipment. Harm Reduction focuses on reducing the adverse consequences among persons who cannot be expected to cease their use of drugs at the present time. The Society believes the following recommendations, when taken as a whole, will enhance the Harm Reduction approach:

- ✓ the expansion of the Needle Exchange Program to ensure there are services available in each Health Region, with access available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- ✓ the administration of the Methadone Maintenance Program be placed within an integrated model of health and addictions care, and be expanded with no user fees
- ✓ a medically supervised drug dispensation system be pilot tested
- ✓ support for the concept of at least one Integrated Service Agency for IDUs (Injection Drug Users) per Health Region which would include as a minimum:
 - a “safe environment” for users to get off the streets
 - educational resources for harm reduction including information about safer sex and safe injecting techniques
 - peer and professional counselling
 - information about social services, financial assistance and housing
 - medical diagnosis and treatment
 - needle exchange and condom availability

- ✓ implementation of sentencing options such as “Drug Courts”, provided there are the necessary detoxification and treatment facilities available
- ✓ a substantial increase in detoxification and accompanying treatment services throughout the province
- ✓ the establishment of a Substance Use Commission with the responsibility to develop a strategic plan for reducing the negative consequences of drug use
- ✓ the purchase, possession and consumption of illicit substances for adult personal use be addressed as a health and social issue, not as a criminal justice issue.

PRISON CONDITIONS

There are several changes that are or will be affecting inmates and staff in the Provincial Correctional Centres. New visiting conditions are in place to prevent drugs from entering the facilities. A new telephone system, similar to Federal Corrections, is to be implemented soon. The issue of smoking is also being tackled at the present time. Meetings between the Society and Corrections officials have taken place in order to make the situation as humane as possible.

SEX OFFENDER REINTEGRATION

During the year, the Provincial Office completed an “Inventory of Programs in British Columbia For Sex Offenders and For Men Who Abuse Their Partners”. Anyone wishing a copy can contact the office.

INCOME ASSISTANCE

The Provincial Government’s Income Assistance Policy has been having a detrimental effect upon recently released offenders. Numerous meetings and exchange of correspondence seems to have modified the policy. Nanaimo led the way in obtaining change.

PROVINCIAL AGM

The election of officers took place at the Annual General Meeting on June 5th in Abbotsford. The officers for this year are the following:

- President - Lisa Allgaier/Victoria
- Past President - Ross Greenwood/Lower Mainland
- 1st Vice-President - Blair Peden/North Okanagan
- 2nd Vice-President - Andie Bennison/Northern
- Sec./Treasurer - Paul Lagace/Thompson

UPCOMING EVENTS

**JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF CANADA
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OCTOBER 21-25 ~ HALIFAX**

**COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICE EMPLOYERS
ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OCTOBER 20-22 ~ PENTICTON**

**JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF BC
PROVINCIAL BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 5-6 ~ VANCOUVER**