







CASW ELECTION PRIORITIES

• THE CRIMINAL CODE and SUBSTANCE USE



CASW recommends the following actions and practices to promote a public health approach to well-being in Canada: the [decriminalization of all psychoactive substances](#), [harm reduction approaches](#) to problematic substance use, and [removal of mandatory minimum penalties](#).

			
<p>The CPC's have been historically against supervised consumption sites, as well as the decriminalization of drugs.</p> <p>The last time the CPC formed government, they passed Bill C-10, which strengthened the use of mandatory minimums in Canada.</p> <p>In their most recent platform, the CPC is silent on mandatory minimums for substance related offenses but advocates for strengthening them in many other areas.</p> <p>They state they will “reorient the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy towards ensuring that everyone suffering from addiction has the opportunity to recover and to lead a drug-free life”</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Commitments contrary to CASW advocacy</p> </div>	<p>The LPC:</p> <p>During their previous mandate, the LPC passed legislation to facilitate the opening of new safe injection sites and shifted the responsibility of federal drug policy under the purview of the Minister of Health – away from Justice.</p> <p>Further, the LPC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> decriminalized cannabis during their previous mandate pledge to invest \$500 million to support the provinces and territories in providing access to a full-range of evidence-based treatment, recognizing that successful treatment is not determined by long-term abstinence within the first 100 days of a new mandate, reform the Criminal Code to repeal relevant mandatory minimum penalties and requiring police and Crown prosecutors to consider diverting individuals out of the criminal justice system <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Some strong commitments</p> </div>	<p>The NDP has committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> end the criminalization and stigma of drug addiction to work with the provinces to support overdose prevention sites, and expand access to treatment on demand for people struggling with addiction restore the independence of the judiciary by reducing reliance on mandatory minimums and allowing trial judges to have greater discretion in sentencing ensure that Gladue principles are consistently applied in court proceedings, and uphold the importance of community-based and restorative justice approaches <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Some strong commitments</p> </div>	<p>The GPC has committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decriminalize possession of illicit drugs for personal use Create a legal and policy environment that funds and advances evidence-based programmes, in order to facilitate the development and scaling up of harm reduction services across all of Canada, including in rural communities and prisons Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences and enable courts to determine appropriate sentences based on the circumstances of each individual case and established sentencing laws and principles Take steps to ensure that, where some form of incarceration is necessary, individuals are, as quickly as possible, held close to their community to allow for more effective reintegration and rehabilitation <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Very strong commitments</p> </div>

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CASW is seeking commitments from the federal parties on the following actions and practices to promote a public health approach to well-being in Canada:

- the [decriminalization of all psychoactive substances](#):
Our current system is not only ineffective at reducing drug use, but it has also created the crisis we are in now: we require a paradigm shift to take immediate action. The evidence is there – a public health, harm reduction approach to drugs saves lives – we just need to take the step into full implementation of what the previous federal government has already begun.
- [harm reduction approaches](#) to problematic substance use
Legislative changes that facilitate the opening of new safe injection sites, the renewal of harm reduction as a pillar in the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy, and the adoption of the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act are all positive steps towards saving lives in Canada, but more can be done.
- [removal of mandatory minimum penalties](#)
CASW has actively advocated against mandatory minimums specific to drug offences. CASW has consistently advocated for the elimination of mandatory minimums as the next step in this Government's public health approach to addressing our nation's most challenging health, economic and social issues.