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DRUG CRISIS IN CANADA

Carlo Papi
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One of the darker sides of Canada, or really, any modern urban area in the world, is the growing drug problem. This serious public health crisis is affecting everybody even if you don't realize it. It damages ties within local communities, especially those of a lower socioeconomic status, and contributes to increased crime rates. And it is not just criminals who suffer the consequences of drug use, legal and physical. Not just those who you don't care about, those who commit violent crimes or other violations. Those who are responsible for making your community unsafe. It is affecting those who you *should* care about. Students. Not even just college/university students. High school students, and in some cases, *elementary* school students. According to the 1999 Ontario Student Drug Use Survey, which surveyed male and female students from grades 7-13, 29% of Ontario students had used cannabis in just that past year. That's well over a quarter, approaching a third! That was in 1999. Imagine it today where drugs, of all types, have become *more* accessible than less, and now vapes have been added into the mix. No seventh grader should have access to drugs of any sorts. And now, as drugs have somehow become more accessible, more seventh grader and students of similar age would have access to drugs. This is just unacceptable. Even if they don't care about the criminals on the street, every decent Canadian should rise up and take a stance on this issue!

More on government responses to the issue on the next page

DRUG USE SEMINAR

Wednesday, May 15th, 2024
Emily Carr Secondary School
4901 Rutherford Rd, Vaughan, Ontario
L4H 3C2
emily.carr.ss@yrdsb.ca
(905) 850-5012



OPIOID USE

Opioid use is another pressing issue when it comes to the drug crisis. Opioids are considered to be a class of drugs that influence the brain to produce a variety of effects, which include pain relief. They can be found in prescription drugs, including pain killers. Examples of illegal opioids include fentanyl and heroin. Fentanyl holds the crown for causing the most deaths compared to other hard-core street drugs. However, you may be surprised to learn that many of the fentanyl-related deaths were accidental, where often, the victim was even unaware that they were consuming fentanyl. Often, when buying from street markets, they purchased less potent opioids to satisfy their cravings or addition. However, these less potent, and therefore **safer** street drugs might have been contaminated with fentanyl, which would happen more often than you would think. A lethal dose of fentanyl is only 2 to 3 milligrams. These people are not crazy drug addicts, but people who might be going through a hard time, maybe they lost a loved one, and they are hoping for some medicated relief. These are not lives worth losing.

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PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL RESPONSES IN THE 'WAR ON DRUGS' IN CANADA

Governments at both the provincial and federal level in Canada have issued measures to help manage the drug situation in the country. However, on both of these levels, the measures only seem to be working to an extent, all while some provinces, such as British Columbia, appear to be going backwards, after approving or supporting the decriminalization of possession of up to a certain quantity for person recreational use, i.e., consumption. The Government of B.C. has passed a three-year exemption on all criminal charges for possession of up to a certain quantity. An exemption which will do little to combat drugs in the country, but instead, promote it. Some measures the Government of Ontario has introduced to combat opioid-usage in the province include mandating the reporting of E.R. visits for opioid-overdoses. This was done in the April of 2017. They are also pushing appropriate pain management in the healthcare system, to reduce the need felt by many to turn to street drugs for pain, treatment for additions and dependencies, harm reduction and mitigation, as well as developing enhanced reporting and early warning systems. The Government of Ontario also launched a new branch of Health Ontario, called the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence. Ontario is also working well with regional municipalities and other municipalities to more easily distribute naloxone to people in need; a drug to help reverse the effects of an overdose, delaying immediate death, giving more time for medical attention to see the victim. Measures employed by the federal government include giving more funding to projects, and increasing access to harm reduction and treatment programs/services. One can argue that more efforts are needed from all levels of government to properly combat the issue of drug use in this country. But in order to do this, more direct action needs to be taken by these governments, which we still have yet to see. For now, the 'War on Drugs' continues in Canada, along with the rest of the world.