



## Canadian government: New time has come



During his two-day stay in Scandinavia in September 2006 Tony Clement visited ECAD Head Office in Stockholm. Mr Clement was informed about work done in Sweden to combat both HIV and drug abuse at the same time, among other questions.

According to *The Canadian Press*, Health Minister Tony Clement announced the Conservative government's anti-drug strategy in the end of September with a stark warning: "the party's over" for illicit drug users.

"In the next few days, we're going to be back in the business of an anti-drug strategy," Clement told *The Canadian Press*. "In that sense, the party's over." The minister says his government wants to clear up the uncertainty. "There's been a lot of mixed messages going out about illicit drugs," Clement said in an interview after a symposium designed to bring together Canada's health communities to combat mental health issues. For too long, Clement argues, governments in Canada have been sending the wrong message about drug use. It's time, he says, to take a tougher approach to dealing with the problem.

"There hasn't been a meaningful retooling of our strategy to tackle illicit drugs in over 20 years in this country," Clement said. "We're going to live in a different world and take tackling these issues very seriously

because of the impact on the health and safety of our kids."

The Conservatives' wide-ranging \$64 million anti-drug strategy is expected to combine treatment and prevention programs with stiffer penalties for illicit drug use, and a crackdown at the border against drug smuggling.

Clement said treatment and prevention programs were his key priorities for the health element of the drug strategy.

"Yes, there's a justice issue to that," he said. "But there's also a treatment issue, there's also a prevention issue."

Clement has suggested in the past that he opposes so-called harm reduction strategies for combating illegal drug use, including safe-injection sites.

At a Canadian Medical Association meeting in August, he was quoted saying "harm reduction, in a sense, takes many forms. To me, prevention is harm reduction. Treatment is harm reduction. Enforcement is harm reduction."

### Director answers

September was marked by many important international events where ECAD has played its part. "ECAD Newsletter" asked Tomas Hallberg, Director, to comment.

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### UK: the groundswell of opinion

Saying that he had always been against the decriminalization of marijuana, Jack Straw, Labour Justice Minister, announced that he was glad the British government is considering upgrading the legal status of cannabis.

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### ★ NEW MEMBERS



### Welcome, Bucharest!

We welcome another European capital that joined ECAD on September, 19. Bucharest, Rumania, signed the Stockholm declaration and at the same time announced participation in ECAD's so far largest program "Youth in Europe".

Visit [www.youthineurope.org](http://www.youthineurope.org) to get to know about the program

# People's movements raise their voices

Conversation with Director

Many events in the drug-political field today happen in connection with the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Narcotic Drugs, UNGASS. One of the biggest arrangements in Sweden in this context will likely be the World Forum Against Drugs (WFAD).

Tomas, could you please tell us about this event.

- The idea is to create a scene to manifest views of people's movements from all around the world. Forum will gather in Stockholm, the aim being to express support to the UN Conventions on Drugs and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which, in the Article 33, states the rights of every child to be protected from the illicit use of narcotic drugs. In our opinion, it is important before forming of a new UN strategy on drugs to show people's will in this question.

The Forum is planned for September 15-17, 2008. We count on participation of about eleven-twelve hundred delegates from many countries. The organising committee consists of a number of Swedish NGOs, including ECAD.

## World Forum Against Drugs



How does the organising committee plan to draw attention of public and media to this event?

- Naturally, there will be a number of high-level speakers who we expect to come to the Forum. Among them Antonio Maria Costa, the Head of the UNODC. However, I'd like to emphasize that the Forum is people's event with, above all, seminars where the delegates will go through different questions within prevention, control, treatment etc. They will try to adhere to a resolution on what a restrictive drug policy in the spirit of the UN Conventions should imply.

Preparations will demand a lot of voluntary work from the organisers' side. The Swedish state has promised to support the event with two million Swedish crowns (appr. 200,000 Euro). However, more resources are needed. We welcome everyone who is willing to participate and to support this Forum.

Besides WFAD, what else is planned in connection with UNGASS?

- ECAD has since a while back actively participated in preparations before UNGASS within the Vienna NGO Committee. Our organisation is a member of Program Committee responsible for a series of consultations "Beyond 2008" with representatives for the Civil Society from all around the world. The goal of these consultations is to evaluate what has been done during the last 10 years within the field of drug combat and come up with proposals for the future drug policies.

We have also been co-responsible for the organising of the sub-regional conference for NGOs from Eastern Europe and Central Asia which took place 12-14 September 2007 in Kiev, Ukraine.

The consultations are based upon so called "balanced approach" which means that NGOs representing different ideological grounds, from harm reduction to a more restrictive line, are welcome to share their views. Representatives for the regional conferences will meet in July 2008 in Vienna for concluding consultations where the results of all 9 hearings will be analysed and presented in a document addressed to the UN General Assembly.

Tomas, you say that the participants represented a wide spectrum of methods within the drug field. Did it influence the discussions?

- There were very interesting discussions in Kiev. In short, many organisations face the same problems no matter what ideological ground they stand on. They often describe their problems from a local perspective and their difficulties are about cooperation with the authorities, corruption etc. Discussions as such went in a very constructive way.

For me it was useful to find out at first hand how the situation looks like in different countries. In the first sub-regional consultations participated organisations from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Belarus, among the others. It is obvious that all those countries have different conditions for the anti-drug work.

What's on the ECAD's agenda for the coming months?

- I can list some upcoming events. The next regional consultation within "Beyond 2008" takes place in Belgrade in October. Participants of the ECAD's so far largest program ever, "Youth in Europe" meet for a conference in Reykjavik 18-19 October. Three ECAD's regional networks - Swedish, Russian and Balkan - will have their conferences and annual meetings in October-November respectively in Gothenburg, Stavropol and Sarajevo. The Swedish network prepares a study visit to Scotland for Swedish politicians in order to look how the drug questions are being addressed there. ECAD in cooperation with the Swedish governmental committee "Mobilisation Against Drugs" prepares a conference for the judicial authorities for the countries around the Baltic Sea which is due to take place in November in St. Petersburg, Russia.

You can follow ECAD's agenda on our web site [www.ecad.net](http://www.ecad.net)

### Facts:

The Vienna NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs was established in the early 1980s to provide a link between international NGOs concerned with drug related problems and the UN drug control bodies.

[www.vngoc.org](http://www.vngoc.org)



Work in groups, Kiev

## USA: Successes in Substance Abuse Recovery Highlighted

Current illicit drug use has declined among the nation's adolescents, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) informs. But Officials Express Concern Over Rising Prescription Drug Abuse

The new National survey provides statistical breakdowns for many types of substances including marijuana, prescription drugs, cocaine, methamphetamines, and heroin.

In general, the 2006 survey reveals that an estimated 22.6 million persons (9.2 percent of the population ages 12 and older) may have had either substance abuse or dependency problems in the past year. Of these, 3.2 million were dependent on or abused both alcohol and illicit drugs; 3.8 million were dependent on or abused illicit drugs but not alcohol; and 15.6 million were dependent on or abused alcohol but not illicit drugs.

2.5 million people received substance abuse treatment at specialty facilities in 2006.

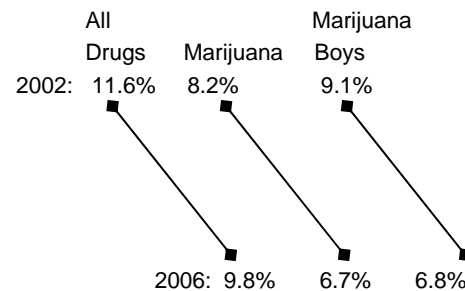
The survey also shows that the problems of substance abuse and mental illness are often intertwined. For example, 34.6 percent of 12 to 17 year olds who had a major depressive episode in the past year had used illicit drugs - as opposed to 18.2 percent of

youths who had not experienced a major depressive episode during this period. In 2006, 3.2 million youths ages 12 to 17 had at least one major depressive episode.

Overall, the survey indicated 30.4 million adults had at least one major depressive episode in their lifetime.

Since 2002, current illicit drug use among 12- to 17-year-olds is down from 11.6 percent (2002) to 9.8 percent (2006), marking a cumulative decrease of 16 percent. In the same time period, current marijuana use also decreased 18 percent (from 8.2 percent in 2002 to 6.7 percent in 2006). The decline in marijuana use was particularly pronounced in male youths, from 9.1 percent in 2002 to 6.8 percent in 2006, or a decrease of 25 percent.

Current drug use:



Abuse of prescription drugs among youth, however, continues to be an area of concern. Nonmedical use of painkillers was the illicit drug use category with the largest number of recent initiates among persons aged 12 or older (2.2 million). According to the study, seven million persons aged 12 or older used prescription-type psychotherapeutic drugs nonmedically in the past month. Of these, 5.2 million used painkillers, a 10 percent increase from 2005 (4.7 million). And, among persons aged 12 or older who used painkillers nonmedically in the past 12 months, 55.7 percent reported that they obtained the drugs from "a friend or relative for free."

The findings of the The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) 2006 survey are consistent with another large-scale longitudinal study, Monitoring the Future from the University of Michigan, which also shows an overall decline in teen drug use since 2002.

NSDUH is an annual survey of approximately 67,500 people including residents of households, non-institutionalized group quarters and civilians living on military bases. The complete survey findings are available on the web at

<http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUHLatest.htm>

## ★ YOUTH DRUG USE AT A FIVE YEAR LOW, NEW SURVEY SHOWS ★



### The needle exchange as method to reduce HIV transmission among the injecting drug users is overestimated

In Volume 1, Issue 3 of the The Journal of Global Drug Policy and Practice a group of Swedish researchers: Kerstin Käll, Ulric Hermansson, Ellen J. Amundsen, Klas Rönnbäck and Sten Rönnberg, on the basis of international research, demonstrate in their article The Effectiveness of Needle Exchange Programmes for HIV Prevention - A Critical Review that the needle exchange as method to reduce HIV transmission among the injecting drug users is an overestimated measure.

Visit [www.globaldrugpolicy.org/1/3/1.php](http://www.globaldrugpolicy.org/1/3/1.php) to read the article.

#### Abstract

"HIV transmission by contaminated needles and syringes among injecting drug users (IDUs) is one of the three main modes of transmission that fuel the HIV pandemic. Needle exchange programmes (NEPs) were adopted to reduce HIV transmission in this risk

group. The aim of this review was to investigate evidence for the effectiveness of NEPs.

Literature searches were conducted covering articles published until December 2005. In the final selection only studies using HIV incidence or prevalence data as outcome variables were included. Nine studies presented data addressing the effect of NEPs on HIV incidence. Seven of these studies showed no significant effect, one showed a positive and one an unfavourable effect. Three looked at HIV prevalence at baseline, all showing an unfavourable effect. The method used in three ecological studies that investigated changes in HIV prevalence in cities with and without NEPs have drawbacks, and the results should not be used as evidence for the effectiveness of NEPs.

The effectiveness of NEPs to prevent HIV transmission among IDUs is overrated in previous reviews. The conclusion that NEPs are the superior method for preventing HIV transmission among IDUs may have delayed the implementation of more effective and integrated methods."

## Jack Straw: We made a mistake on cannabis



*The Justice Minister, Jack Straw, became the most senior Labour minister on 25 September to speak out against the decriminalisation of cannabis.*

He told Channel Four News that he was against downgrading it to a class C drug. "I was always against it, let me say, I can disclose this now, reducing the categorisation of cannabis from B to C, I thought that was an error," he said.

"I'm happy to have a debate about that, but I'm absolutely clear - what we know about cannabis now, more than we did even five

and 10 years ago, is the way it can lead to very serious exacerbation of mental health problems."

Gordon Brown, in his conference speech, promised that the Government would be tough on drugs. Last month, he indicated that he was ready to reverse the downgrading of cannabis.

He told GMTV: "It is the message you send out.

"Why I want to upgrade cannabis and make it more a drug that people worry about is that we don't want to send out a message - just like with alcohol - to teenagers that we accept these things."

*/by Telegraph UK*

## Anti-methamphetamine campaign

*The White House National Drug Control Policy Director, John Walters, announced in September a new campaign targeting young adult methamphetamine (meth) users.*

According to the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 10.4 million Americans age 12 and older have tried methamphetamine at least once in their lifetimes. While teen meth use is down significantly in recent years and past month use is less than one percent, young adults continue to use. In

fact, among 18 to 25 year olds, there are nearly 200,000 current meth users. The Anti-Meth Campaign is directed toward 18-34 year-olds, whose meth use tends to be higher and who are often key influencers of teens.

For more information on the Anti-Meth Campaign and to view advertising and other resources, visit

[www.methresources.gov](http://www.methresources.gov)

## Pot Smoking more common than cigarette smoking in Canadian teens

Usage rates indicate that not only is the average age of first drug use dropping precipitously in Canada, almost half of 18 to 19 year olds and a third of 15 to 17 year olds use marijuana and use it more often than tobacco. Canadian prevention officials are calling for a re-thinking of drug education approaches in light of the alarming survey.

*/ The Drug Free America Report*

*Our European societies have experimented and evaluated both tolerance and intolerance to illicit drug use and drug abuse. It is our reflection upon this which guides us towards non-use. This in regard to our citizens' well-being.*



**ECAD** is Europe's leading organization promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens. ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions.  
**Has your city joined ECAD?**

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## Badgers against pot

*For the time being, a stronghold of a colony of badgers makes it impossible to have a boulevard of wiet (coffee shops) in Maastricht, the Netherlands.*

The city council decided to move the drug scene from the centre of town to the outskirts. According to the plan, before the end of the year eight coffee shops should be moved and bundled into three "wiet boulevards". In three years time they are supposed to be moved further out, which will put them in the even closer vicinity of the Belgian border. However, to the disappointment of the council, a family of badgers seems to have decided otherwise.

## CURIOUS

The animals have established their dwelling on the spot destined for one of the boulevards. Badgers are species under protection and their relocation is not the easiest thing to do. This has slowed the whole process down.



What the prime minister of Belgium and some Dutch authorities have failed to do, namely to stop the plans of moving coffee shops from the centre of Maastricht to the Belgian border, managed a family of badgers!

*J.A. Berlijn, representative of ECAD, Rotterdam, the Netherlands*

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