



Federal Budget 2019: Highlights

The following summary presents highlights from the Government of Canada's [Budget 2019](#) that are relevant to CCSA and our stakeholders.

Enhancing the Federal Response to the Opioid Crisis

Announcement

- \$30.5 million over five years, with \$1 million in ongoing funding, for targeted measures to address persistent gaps in harm reduction and treatment. Specifically, funding will support efforts to expand access to a safe supply of prescription opioids and improve access to opioid overdose training and naloxone in underserved communities.

Relevance

- The announcement responds to calls for options to address the opioid crisis that move beyond supervised consumption to address the increasing toxicity of the drugs themselves. The announcement specifies expanding the safe supply of prescription opioids, implying that programs will likely take the form of scaling up heroin-assisted treatment (HAT) or similar programs where participants are under medical supervision. The evidence from HAT pilots to date supports this approach. Some stakeholders, notably the Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs (CAPUD), have also been advocating for a safe supply outside medical supervision to increase access.
- The per-year dollar amount, when applied to both safe supply and naloxone access, will likely allow for limited and targeted scale-up only. CCSA will continue to monitor and liaise with Health Canada to obtain additional details.

Cannabis Taxation

Announcement

- Excise duties on cannabis edibles, extracts and topicals will be imposed based on the quantity of THC in the final product.
- Cannabis purchased for authorized medical purposes in accordance with the *Cannabis Act* will be eligible for the medical expense tax credit, effective to October 17, 2018.

Relevance

- CCSA has recommended taxation according to THC levels in all our submissions to the federal government. This approach is an evidence-based way to incentivize the use of lower-THC products and promote lower-risk cannabis use.



- Cannabis for medical purposes was previously eligible for the medical expense tax credit when regulated under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. The measure announced in the budget ensures that individuals accessing cannabis for medical purposes retain the same tax exemptions available to them before legalization.

Interprovincial Alcohol Trade

Announcement

- The government will remove the federal requirement that alcohol moving from one province to another be sold or consigned to a provincial liquor authority.

Relevance

- This regulatory change will result in consumers being able to move alcohol across provincial and territorial borders more freely. This change will promote price competition closer to the borders to compete for consumer purchases, which puts provinces taking a public health approach (e.g., government monopoly and minimum pricing) at a disadvantage. Price competition increases pressure to move away from an evidence-based public health model toward a more profit-oriented model.

Northern Communities

Announcement

- \$50 million over 10 years, with \$5 million per year ongoing, to support the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy.
- Commitment to support the construction and ongoing operation of an addiction treatment facility in Nunavut (no amount provided), in partnership with the Government of Nunavut and Inuit partners.

Relevance

- CCSA is exploring opportunities to partner with ITK. These opportunities include the possibility of partnering on an Inuit-led event in the North with ITK and the Mental Health Commission of Canada focusing on substance use and mental health.
- There are currently no addictions treatment centres in Nunavut, requiring individuals to relocate to the South, often Ottawa, where they are separated from friends, family and culture. The ability to access services in-territory has the potential to reduce dislocation, increase the cultural appropriateness of the services offered and increase community capacity.
- CCSA has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Nunavut to provide expert consultation and advice on matters related to substance use. This MOU provides an opportunity for CCSA to engage with Nunavut partners to promote an evidence-based approach to developing the new facility, including through sharing CCSA's knowledge products and by leveraging CCSA's network to provide access to others in the field with relevant expertise.



Strengthening Indigenous Governance Tools

Announcement

- \$78.9 million over seven years, with \$13.7 million per year ongoing, to fund the Surveys on Indigenous Peoples and the First Nations Regional Health Survey.

Relevance

- The First Nations Regional Health Survey includes questions on substance use that are important in monitoring trends and that can contribute to and complement CCSA's data collection and monitoring initiatives.
- Robust and timely data is essential in evaluating the impact of policies and practice, such as legalizing cannabis, and in informing evidence-based approaches.

Pan-Canadian Suicide Prevention Service

Announcement

- \$25 million over five years, with \$5 million per year ongoing, to support a pan-Canadian suicide prevention service providing access to 24/7 bilingual support via voice, text or chat.

Relevance

- The announcement does not speak to the degree to which the service will include expertise in substance use. However, at minimum it will be a resource for those experiencing suicidal thoughts where substance use could be a contributing or aggravating factor.
- The announcement also does not specify a lead for the initiative. However, the Public Health Agency of Canada is the lead agency for implementing the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention. CCSA has been a member of the National Collaborative on Suicide Prevention in the past.

Health and Wellbeing

Announcement

- Expanding healthcare services exempt from GST/HST to include multidisciplinary approaches (e.g., services that combine physiotherapy, occupational therapy and primary care).

Relevance

- The intent of the expansion is to reduce barriers to accessing multi-disciplinary care. This initiative responds to the request of those facing chronic pain who are seeking to pursue alternatives to opioid use.



Supporting Research on Military and Veteran Health

Announcement

- \$20.1 million over five years, with \$5 million per year ongoing, to Veteran's Affairs in support of the creation of a Centre of Excellence on Chronic Pain Research.

Relevance

- Veterans are at increased risk for experiencing chronic pain and problematic substance use. Providing improved options for pain management aligns with calls to reduce reliance on opioids. This research centre also provides an opportunity to investigate the use of cannabis for pain by veterans, a group that has had both disproportionate rates and quantities of medical cannabis use authorized.

Strengthening the RCMP

Announcement

- \$77.3 million over five years and \$13.5 million ongoing for enhanced law enforcement at the border.

Relevance

- International trafficking of illicit drugs and precursors is a domestic concern as it contributes to the opioid crisis and use of methamphetamines, and an international concern in terms of cannabis exports.
- CCSA is a member of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Drug Advisory Committee. We also partner with Public Safety Canada and at co-hosted events such as the Cannabis Symposium in February 2019 international trafficking is a topic of interest.

Support for Science, Research and Technology

Organizations

Announcement

- Up to \$40 million over two years in matched funds to the Brain Canada Foundation's Canada Brain Research Fund.
- \$100.5 million over five years to Genome Canada.

Relevance

- Neuroscience and epigenetics are two fields in which knowledge related to substance use is developing quickly. Investments in these fields have the potential to advance our understanding of substance use and effective interventions.
- Additional funding for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to support cannabis research was not included in the budget. This funding would have strengthened planned initiatives being undertaken in partnership with CIHR, specifically increasing the number of team



grants and the extent of geographic coverage possible. CIHR and CCSA will continue to explore other options to support additional grants.

Paid Parental Leave for Student Researchers

Announcement

- The government will invest \$37.4 million over five years, and \$8.6 million per year ongoing, to the federal granting councils to expand parental leave from six months to 12.

Relevance

- As CCSA enters into funding partnerships with the granting councils, we will need to consider whether or how these new provisions will apply to projects funded in whole or part by CCSA.

Housing

Announcement

- Commitment to move forward on the National Housing Strategy, including announcement of the Reaching Home, a new \$2.2 billion program to prevent and reduce homelessness, which launched on April 1, 2019.

Relevance

- Stable housing is an important factor in accessing services and achieving recovery.

Strengthening the GBA+ Process

Announcement

- The budget applies gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) to promote investments supportive of equity and recognizing Canada's diverse population.

Relevance

- Substance use does not impact all Canadians equally. GBA+ is an important tool in ensuring that investments reach and have the desired impact on diverse populations.
- CCSA is incorporating GBA+ into our work. The analysis provided in the budget demonstrates an approach to strategic and financial planning that we can use to inform our own processes.



CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

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