



# News Release Communiqué

For immediate release

Également disponible en français

## **INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS RELEASE NEW REPORT ON RESPONSIBLE REGULATION OF DRUGS**

*In Canada, a conversation on responsible regulation could save lives today*

**TORONTO, September 24, 2018** — The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network welcomes the new report, *Regulation: the responsible control of drugs*, published today by the Global Commission on Drug Policy, and calls on the federal government to study it carefully as Canada continues to struggle with an unabated crisis of overdose deaths.

This new report examines how governments can take control of currently illegal drug markets through responsible regulation, while recognizing the difficulties and tackling the real implications of transitioning from illegal to legally regulated drug markets. It offers concrete answers regarding the organizational capacity of state institutions to regulate and control a legal market of potentially dangerous products. It highlights the challenges facing impoverished populations that constitute the “working class” of the illegal drug markets. It offers possible ways forward to deal with the risks inherent to the resilience of organized crime. Finally, this report calls for reform of the prohibition-based international drug control system, which is compromising a universal and holistic approach to the “drug problem.”

**In Canada, against the backdrop of a raging opioid overdose crisis fuelled by a toxic illegal supply, responsible regulation could save lives.**

Last year, the Global Commission on Drug Policy released another important report, *The Opioid Crisis in North America*, ultimately calling for the elimination of illegal drug markets by carefully regulating different drugs according to their potential harms. As stated then, we know that a regulated drug supply, for opioids and for other currently illegal drugs, will decrease the likelihood of people consuming drugs from a toxic supply of unknown origin. Canada is already taking its first step with the legal regulation of cannabis, which will happen next month. Legalizing and regulating other drugs and approaching drug policy from a public health standpoint, versus a criminal justice one, could help put an end to the rising body count.

“Drug prohibition has been an abysmal failure and continues to devastate lives and entire communities Canada-wide,” says Richard Elliott, executive director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. “We need look no further than the ongoing epidemic of overdose deaths, high rates of incarceration of people who use drugs, and the alarming spread of HIV and hepatitis C. Prohibition, policing and prisons don’t solve ‘the drug problem.’ Drug policy must be guided by evidence, public health objectives and respect for human rights.

Today's report outlines how lawmakers can move thoughtfully and deliberately to sensibly regulate drugs and make our families and communities safer."

"This report provides a coherent account of what the legal regulation of drugs can look like in a real-life context, based on scientific evidence and current regulatory frameworks for legal substances," says Ruth Dreifuss, chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy and former president of Switzerland. "It draws particular attention to the risks associated with over-commercialization and the need to learn from past mistakes in regulating alcohol, tobacco and prescription opioids."

The Global Commission on Drug Policy recommends that policymakers open local and national participatory processes to shape the reforms and collect evidence on the legal regulation of drugs. Furthermore, the Commission recommends that such reforms should be incremental, starting with pilot projects for the regulation of lower potency substances.

**The report is available on the [website of the Global Commission](#).**

-30-

**Contact:**

Joshua Terry

Communications and Campaigns Officer, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

416 595-1666 ext. 236

[jterry@aidslaw.ca](mailto:jterry@aidslaw.ca)

**About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with, at risk of or affected by HIV or AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research and analysis, litigation and other advocacy, public education and community mobilization.