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CPA Releases Position Statement on the Decriminalization of Illegal Substances

September 14, 2023 (Ottawa) – Given that Canada is in the midst of an overdose crisis, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) has released [a position statement on the decriminalization of illegal substances in Canada](#).

The report was prepared by the CPA Working Group on Decriminalization and was based on a systematic review of the impacts of the current criminal justice approach(es) to substance use in Canada and the impacts of decriminalization in other jurisdictions.

The report calls for all criminal penalties associated with simple possession of illegal substances be removed from the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, and strongly recommends that the determination of the quantity of “personal use” should be made in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including people with lived and living experience with substance use.

The report includes seven actionable recommendations for governments and relevant stakeholders – governments, individuals with lived and living experience, public policy makers, health care professionals, researchers, and law enforcement – in conjunction with the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

“The current criminal justice approach to substance use is leading to a myriad of harms, especially amongst people experiencing structural inequities and racism” said Dr. Eleanor Gittens, CPA President. “Treating substance use health as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice issue will have significant positive impacts for the millions of Canadians who are impacted by substance use”, noted Dr. Andrew Kim, Working Group Co-Chair.

The CPA looks forward to working with all stakeholders to advance the mental health of the people of Canada.

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About the CPA

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national voice for the science, practice and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. The CPA is Canada’s largest association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators and researchers, as well as students. Psychologists are the country’s largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers, making our profession a key resource for the mental health treatment Canadians need. For more information, please visit our website at www.cpa.ca.

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