

**Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police / Association
canadienne des chefs de police**

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National Prescription Drug Drop-Off Day Sat. May 10, 2014

Backgrounder

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, together with Health Canada, Public Safety Canada, and Partnership for a Drug Free Canada, is pleased to lead and support Canada's second annual **Prescription Drug Drop-off Day**, which is set for Saturday, May 10, 2014. On that day police agencies across the country will host events with their community partners to provide an easy way for people to dispose of unused and expired prescription drugs.

Background:

Confronting the serious public safety impacts of prescription drug abuse in Canada is an important priority of the CACP Drug Abuse Committee. The following is an excerpt from *First Do No Harm: Responding to Canada's Prescription Drug Crisis*, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, March 2013:

Certain prescription drugs, like opioids, stimulants, sedatives and tranquilizers are associated with serious harms such as addiction, overdose and death. These drugs can have a devastating impact on people's lives and their families, as well as place a significant burden on our healthcare, social services and public safety systems.

Recent research from the United States estimates the annual cost of the non-medical use of prescription opioids to be more than \$50 billion, with lost productivity and crime accounting for 94% of this amount. In countries such as Canada, where these prescription drugs are readily available, their associated harms have become a leading public health and safety concern.

Canada is the world's second largest per capita consumer of prescription opioids after the United States.³ The International Narcotics Control Board reports that Canadians' use of prescription opioids increased by 203% between 2000 and 2010, an increase steeper than in the U.S. Some First Nations in Canada have declared a community crisis owing to the prevalence of the harms associated with prescription drugs.

According to the 2011 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey, 23% of Canadians aged 15 and older reported using a prescription drug at least once during the past 12 months.⁶ The 2010–11 Youth Smoking Survey revealed that 8.2% of Canadian youth in grades 6–12 reported using prescription and over-the-counter drugs in the past year to get high.⁷ Deaths related to prescription opioids doubled in Ontario, from 13.7 deaths per million in 1991 to 27.2 per million in 2004, more than twice the mortality rate from HIV (12 per million).

The following excerpt is taken from *Prescription Drug Drop-off Initiative: Evaluation Toolkit*, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, April 2014

Prescription Drop-off Initiatives

These initiatives aim to reduce the harms associated with certain prescription drugs (e.g., opioids, sedative-hypnotics, stimulants) by:

- Promoting both the safe storage and disposal of prescription, over-the-counter and other drugs;
- Reducing the amount of these drugs available in people's homes for possible diversion and accidental poisonings;
- Identifying unused medications to inform prescribing and dispensing practices;
- Reducing the environmental impact associated with the inappropriate disposal of these drugs in the garbage and sewer systems; and
- Increasing awareness about the safe storage and disposal of unused medication.

As many prescription drugs with a high potential for misuse come from the medicine cabinets of friends and families, the proper medical storage of these drugs can effectively reduce diversion (National Advisory Committee on Prescription Drug Misuse, 2013).

Why Prescription Drop-off Initiatives Are Important

A large portion of medications remain unused.

- Unused drugs and inappropriately stored drugs can be used by people other than those for whom they were intended. For instance, in Ontario, youth reported obtaining opioids from their home (72%) or their friends (6%; Brands et al., 2010). This means of obtaining medication can result in accidental poisonings or non-medical use.
- PDols can serve as a collection and disposal site for unused drugs, as well as provide a means of educating the public on their risks.
- PDols reduce environmental impacts by intercepting unused drugs before they reach landfills and waterways. These initiatives constitute the only environmentally-sound way to dispose of unused drugs (Stoddard & Hugett, 2012; Gray & Hagemer, 2012).
- Many PDols seek to improve healthcare practices by providing data on the types of drugs collected to reduce over prescribing and dispensing of drugs that result in the most pharmaceutical waste (Gray-Winnett et al., 2010; Stoddard & Huggett, 2012) and have been associated with prescription drug misuse (PDM).

Links

- The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
<http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/Prescription-Drugs/Pages/default.aspx>
- Partnership for a Drug Free Canada
<http://www.canadadrugfree.org/drug-info/prescription-drugs/>
- Public Safety Canada- Prescription Drug Return Initiatives in Canada
<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/prscptn-drg-rtrrn/index-eng.aspx>

Questions?

For more information about upcoming Prescription Drug Drop-off Day events in your area, contact your local police service.

To learn more about how to dispose of or return unused prescription drugs, please contact your local pharmacy.