

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Canadian Drug Policy Coalition launches national dialogue series on the overdose crisis and COVID-19 in Montreal

Using learnings from the pandemic to respond to Canada's other public health crisis

Vancouver, BC—Never before in Canadian history have communities confronted two concurrent public health catastrophes like the overdose crisis, fueled by a toxic drug supply, and a coronavirus pandemic that has uprooted the routines of daily life and society. At the heart of these converging crises are people who use drugs. COVID-19 has made everything worse for this community at a time when overdose deaths are rising across the country and individual health and safety is more precarious than ever.

In response to this unprecedented time, the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition at Simon Fraser University, in partnership with the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, is launching [Getting to Tomorrow: Ending the Overdose Crisis](#)—18 public health dialogues across Canada over the next two years aimed at identifying and moving towards solutions to the overdose crisis, in the context of COVID-19, by building consensus and shared meaning.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the illegal drug toxicity death crisis as a catastrophic failure of Canada’s current approach to drugs. Governments have moved mountains in response to the COVID-19 pandemic while a coherent pan-Canadian approach to over 15,000 overdose deaths in the past four and a half years has failed to materialize,” said Donald MacPherson, executive director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition. “We hope the *Getting to Tomorrow* dialogue series will inform, engage, and inspire Canadians to become more involved in building a new approach to drugs based on principles of public health and human rights, and lead to improved health and safety for all in our communities.”

Getting to Tomorrow is also hoping to use learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic to improve Canada’s overdose response at a time when lives are being lost at an unprecedented rate. **More specifically, *Getting to Tomorrow* has three main goals:**

1. **Accelerate** the adoption of public health- and human rights-based drug policies to guide government responses to drugs in Canada
2. **Empower** decision makers and the public to take evidence-based actions by providing the latest research on policies that could end the overdose crisis
3. **Engage** the public in dialogue on issues related to substance use and drug policy

The dialogues will happen virtually (open to invited attendees only) and will invite leaders from diverse communities, including people who use drugs, community and business leaders, government officials, First Nations, public health officials, and law enforcement, to share their stories of navigating the challenges of the overdose crisis during a time of pandemic and global instability. **By sharing perspectives and stories, communities can come to recognize the commonalities that unite us rather than the differences that set us apart. This can lay the groundwork for transformative change.**

Getting to Tomorrow will begin in Montreal on **October 7** with community partner **Association des intervenants en dépendance du Québec (AIDQ)**.



“As Montreal is one of the epicentres of COVID-19 in Canada, the lives of people who use substances are more than ever at risk as the number of overdoses is dramatically rising,” said Sandhia Vadlamudy, executive director of l’Association des intervenants en dépendance du Québec. “Having such a dialogue in Montreal, as well as any other city, will help us understand each other’s perspectives and work together towards better longer-term solutions where everybody wins.”

Getting to Tomorrow is supported by Health Canada through the Substance Use and Addictions Program.

www.gettingtomorrow.ca

Contact

Peter Kim
Strategic Communications Manager
Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
peter_k@sfu.ca
604-787-4043

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About Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

The Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (CDPC) is a coalition of 50 organizations and 4,000 individuals working to support the development of progressive drug policy grounded in science, guided by public health principles, and respectful of human rights. The CDPC operates as a project within Simon Fraser University under the Centre for Applied Research in Addiction and Mental Health. The CDPC seeks to include people who use drugs and those harmed by the war on drugs in moving toward a healthier Canadian society free of stigma and social exclusion.

About Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue creates real-world impact for society’s most pressing challenges by using dialogue and engagement to co-create solutions, exchange knowledge, support community-engaged learning, and to build the capacity of others in the knowledge and practice of dialogue. They strive to bring together diverse voices, stories, perspectives and experiences, with a goal to increase understanding about others and ourselves. It is a conversational process intended to help us gain insight into complex problems to which no one person holds the answer.

About Association des intervenants en dépendance du Québec (AIDQ)

AIDQ is a non-profit organization that includes stakeholders from all sectors interested in the field of addictions in Quebec, such as the public, private and community sectors, public health and social services, education, universities, research, public safety and the workplace. AIDQ’s mission is to promote and support intervention in the areas of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and the social reintegration of people with addictions and those at risk of becoming addicted, through skills development, information, collaboration and the sharing of expertise.

