

themes.

Others point to a relation between mental illness and HIV/injection drug use,¹³ and more broadly, to provincial and federal cutbacks in social services. One expert, for example, noted that "more than 85% of the places dedicated for individuals with mental health illness were closed, yet 30% (of IDUs)...reported a diagnosis of mental illness." Further, "federal government support for social housing disappeared ...detoxes were eliminated as budget restrictions were imposed...social assistance was denied to individuals with outstanding police warrants...We postulate this lack of critical services and the negative effects of deadly public policies facilitated an epidemic of HIV in IDUs."¹⁴

The government, at provincial and especially federal levels, has had to cope with the pressures associated with a galloping debt and deficit by enacting often painful cutbacks in a variety of areas, including programs of relevance to the crisis of illicit injection drug use. A variety of polls over the last few years demonstrate general public support for frugal public spending in order to control perils associated with the debt and deficit. This is an era where the bottom line is increasingly important. With this in mind, it is worth noting the observations of Janet Dunbrack, of Health Canada - Canadian Policy Research Network, Inc. She notes that the cumulative cost of the HIV/AIDS epidemic by the end of 1998 was \$26.8 billion, with the direct cost per individual case of \$153,000. Importantly for our purposes, she calculates that "in order to break even on public investment in prevention, we need only prevent 106 cases per year."¹⁵ As we have already observed, nearly half of the newly diagnosed cases of HIV/AIDS in BC during the year from which statistics are most recently available (1997) are among IDUs. Therefore, it is clear that a rethinking of Government spending on the relation between IUDs and HIV/AIDS is order. That is, a reorientation of Government spending and programs on the crisis of injection drug use may likely save money at a time when the bottom line is increasingly important. In that vein, the following section presents a number of feasible options.

Narcotrafficking and the Body Politic: