

enter the drug-financing business through connections made in Vancouver, or are tempted into it by a relatively safe investment that yield a relatively quick return.

Financing the heroin market is safe because it is difficult to convict those involved in the financial side of heroin trafficking, even after their arrest and detention on narcotics charges. They have the money to hire good, high-priced lawyers. The police are moreover hampered in their task by the fact that they, by law, have to disclose everything connected with the case to the defense team. The views of police officers is that because it has become very resource- and time-consuming to prosecute middle and high level traffickers and financiers, it has become almost impossible to do so. As a result, the justice system is, the police fear, not sending the most important element in the narcotics trade — the financiers — the message that it does not pay to get involved in illicit drugs. What is also worrying is the fact that with the expansion of the illicit drug market, there has sprung up a wide area of commerce that is regulated by criminal gangs. As put by a critic of the US-led “war on drugs” approach — one adopted by Canada and most countries — the nature of illegal markets (in illicit drugs) is such that violence and credible threats becomes a “factor of production” from which criminals (and corrupt governments and officials) earn economic rent.[23] As well, the vast amount of money generated in the drug marketplace, carries with it the danger that law-enforcement officers and other officials might be contaminated. In this respect, the “war on drugs” is not without high cost. It includes wear and tear on institutions, undermines the authority of the rule of law and ultimately threatens political institutions. In other words, it results in the contamination of the state (and governments and associated agencies), politics, economy, and society by money and criminal elements who have, and make big money.[24]

Monetary and Other Cost of the Drugs Business on Society and Communities

Furthermore, according to a study undertaken not very long ago (in 1996), society does incur monetary cost related to crime, law enforcement, court procedures and process, the correction system, the health system, addiction-related (and treatment)

programs, and loss in productivity, etc.[25] This study shows that the estimate cost to Canada with regard to illicit drugs is Can.\$1.37 billion (for 1992). These include: (1) Direct health-care cost \$88 million; (2) Direct losses associated with workplace, \$5.5 million; (3) Direct administrative costs associated with transfer payments, \$1.5 million; (4) Direct cost for prevention and research \$41.9 million; (5) Direct law enforcement cost \$400.3 million; (6) Other direct cost \$10.7 million; (7) Productivity losses \$823.1 million. By province, the estimate of cost due to illicit drugs (in 1992), is as follows: Ontario, \$507.5 million; Quebec, \$334.3 million; British Columbia, \$207.5 million; Alberta, \$135.2 million; Manitoba, \$45.1 million; Saskatchewan, \$36.1 million; Nova Scotia, \$36.1 million; New Brunswick, \$25.2 million; Newfoundland, \$18.2 million; Prince Edward Island, \$4.6 million.[26]

Again, in monetary terms, wastage in term of money diverted to illicit drugs is quite high: An addict needs \$100 - 300 a day to support his/her addiction.[27] This adds up to \$3000- 9000 a month, or \$36,000 - 108,000 a year, for one addict. In downtown Vancouver, with an estimated addict population of 6000, the wastage, or diversion, of money to illicit drugs, would amount to \$216 million to \$648 million, a year. For British Columbia as a whole, with the addict population estimated at 15,000, the figure would be \$540 million to \$1,620 million (\$.54 billion to \$1.62 billion), annually. Most of the money for drug purchase, according to the police, come from crime against property, social assistance payments (from the government, i.e., taxpayers), and a large portion from the proceeds of crime or prostitution, and they can, as such, be counted as monetary cost to society.[28] In addition, there are health risk or cost, that arise from the illicit drug (including heroin) marketplace. Prevalence of HIV is quite high among drug users (of heroin and cocaine especially). In the Vancouver area, the prevalence rose from 25% in 1995 to 50% in 1997. The overdose (OD) death rate in Vancouver is 13 deaths a week, or about 600 a year (in 1997). Death from overdose in the rest of British Columbia is 7 deaths a week (or 360 a year).[29] Other cost, or the “collateral damage”, of illicit drug use (including heroin) are young children, 9-11 years old, being used by their parents to carry drugs (mostly heroin and cocaine); 12 years old