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INTERNATIONAL COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today made the following statement in the House of Commons:

"Mr. Speaker, on Monday, my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, announced the National Drug Strategy, which sets a uniquely Canadian course in dealing with the problems proposed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking. It recognizes the excellent work done by the RCMP, Customs and Excise, and other law enforcement agencies, in preventing the importation and trafficking of drugs.

In general, the programmes of the Strategy are directed at solving domestic problems. However, illicit trafficking is an international industry, and it is clear that Canada cannot solve our drug abuse and trafficking problems in isolation.

Many of the drugs consumed in Canada, such as cocaine and heroin, are brought into our country illegally by well-organized trafficking networks based overseas. In 1985, the RCMP and Customs seized 62 kgs. of heroin, 109 kgs. of cocaine and 19,000 kgs. of hashish. These are the last statistics available, and probably understate the dimensions of the problem today. Furthermore, Canadian territory often serves as a transit point for narcotics being sent by these trafficking networks to other countries. In addition, illicit psychoactive substances are produced in Canada to feed the terrible addictions of citizens of other countries. Clearly, we must act to stem this traffic, not only because Canadians are its victims, but also because we have a role to play as responsible citizens of the world.

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Drug abuse is not new, but its dimensions are. As early as 1909, Canada helped prepare an International Convention to control the traffic of opium, and we continue to play a leading role in organizations such as the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Yesterday, Canada was re-elected to that important Commission which, in the past, has concentrated upon reducing the supply of drugs. Canada, and other countries, have introduced a new focus on the other part of the problem - trying to reduce demands. We are also seeking to take account of the new sophistication of international networks trafficking in drugs.

Their tentacles now stretch around the world, their networks have refined their procedures for moving their products. Some utilize couriers who, travelling by air, will carry the drugs strapped to their bodies. On other occasions, shipments are disguised as cargoes of innocuous commodities. The profits earned by this illicit enterprise are protected by a variety of methods. By use of shell companies and other means the money earned from drug trafficking is sent to offshore havens. So, the United Nations Commission is preparing a new international convention on illicit trafficking. The origin of this Convention is a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly co-sponsored by Canada and adopted in December 1984. The Honourable Member for Calgary West was serving as a member of the Canadian delegation to the UN and announced Canada's co-sponsorship of that important international initiative. This new convention can become a powerful tool for law enforcement agencies around the world, to use against traffickers. Canada places a high priority on successful completion of the new convention.

The Government is working internationally on three other fronts.

First, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control sponsors projects which assist producer countries to develop and finance programmes to help farmers move away from drug production; to improve local standards of living; and to train local police to deal with the extremely well organized drug traffickers. Canada has made substantial contributions to this body's general fund as well as giving two grants of one million dollars apiece, to UNFDAC projects in Thailand and Pakistan to develop alternative crops for farmers. That is a new policy direction for CIDA established in 1985. As well we will continue to consider, on a case by case basis, requests from narcotics producing countries for development assistance.

Second, our contribution to the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control will be raised to \$500,000 this year and to \$1 million by 1991, to demonstrate our commitment to international cooperation.

Third, we are expanding the Consular Awareness Programme of External Affairs, to make Canadian travellers more aware of the dangers of drug purchase, possession, trafficking, and use abroad. More Canadians are in prison overseas for drug offenses than for any other crime.

Mr. Speaker, a United Nations sponsored International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking will take place in Vienna from June 17th to June 26th. Our delegation to this conference will be led by my colleague the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In order to reflect the truly national approach this Government is taking on the issue of drug abuse, the delegation will include representatives from the provinces and the voluntary sector.

Canada played an important role in the drafting of the 1971 Psychotropic Convention, I am pleased to inform the House that while in Vienna, the Minister of National Health and Welfare will deposit the letters of accession which will bring the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances into effect in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Government recognizes that while the major efforts against drug abuse and illicit trafficking will be made in Canada, we ignore its international aspects at our peril. The international component of the National Drug Strategy illustrates our intention to work with other countries to lessen the production, traffic and abuse of drugs, both at home and abroad."