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Presentation to House of Commons –
Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

BILL C- 10 *THE SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITY ACT*
Part II- Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

Remarks By: Chief Barry MacKnight

Chair - Drug Abuse Committee

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

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Let me begin by thanking each of you for inviting me to appear today regarding this very important Bill.

My name is Barry MacKnight, and in addition to my position with the CACP, I am the Chief of Police in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

In 2007 CACP adopted a Drug Policy that was developed through the Drug Abuse Committee, which I Chair. This policy sets out the position of CACP on this very important national issue that has direct impacts on Canadians on a day to day basis. Beyond the pain and suffering that Canadians endure because of the use and abuse of drugs, the best research we have from the Canadian Centre of Substance Abuse shows that the social cost of illegal drugs in Canada is \$8.2 billion dollars per year.

Let me provide a brief overview of the CACP drug policy-

We believe in a balanced approach to the issue of substance use and abuse in Canada, consisting of prevention, education, enforcement, counselling, treatment, rehabilitation, and where appropriate, alternative measures and diversion of offenders in order to counter Canada's drug problems.

We believe in a **balanced continuum of practice** distributed across each component. In addition, the policy components must be fundamentally lawful and ethical, must consider the interests of all, and must strive to achieve a balance between societal and individual interests. We believe that to the greatest extent possible, initiatives should be evidence-based.

Prevention

We strongly believe that prevention is the most important component. Drug education and positive youth development in building resistance strategies towards substance use, as a regular and sustained part of the school curriculum, is imperative.

Enforcement

We are committed to enforcement practices that target the criminal infrastructure, which supports and perpetuates the cycle of crime, violence, disorder, as well as the victimization of the most vulnerable citizens in our communities.

We endorse the practice of police discretion in individual communities, but believe there should be emphasis on enforcement of laws against the possession and illegal use of drugs where the users are engaged in behaviours that harm or interfere in the lawful use or enjoyment of public and private property, and contribute to street disorder. In particular, we believe that enforcement should be a priority in parks, in and around schools, and other locations where vulnerable children and youths are placed at risk.

Healthy Communities and Transition to Treatment

We support a range of strategies that serve to reduce harm in society, and have, in the past, expressed qualified support for certain activities that reduce harm, such as Needle Exchange Programs.

We acknowledge that the reduction of harm is necessary to support public health objectives such as reducing transmission rates of HIV and hepatitis, as well as preventing drug overdoses. But reducing harm should reflect temporary measures to prevent those suffering from addiction from contracting disease, injuring themselves, or dying before they have an opportunity to access, and eventually succeed at treatment.

Some initiatives designed to reduce harm to drug abusers may conflict with law enforcement activities intended to address public safety issues. Therefore we encourage the management and mitigation of these impacts through communication with community partners.

Treatment

Treatment will reduce the number of people suffering from addiction, and reduce their addiction-related behaviours that harm society, and to which the police must devote valuable and limited resources.

We support legislated and properly resourced programs, such as drug courts, and other initiatives, which facilitate and enforce mandated treatment programs.

C-10 Part II- Amendments to the CDSA

The Amendments to the CDSA in this bill are aligned with the CACP focus on dealing with the most serious drug crimes that impact our communities. The clear message to Canadians from these drug crime amendments is that these are serious crimes that warrant serious consequences. The aggravating factors speak for themselves:

- offences committed for a criminal organization
- offences involving the use or threat of violence or weapons
- offenders with previous drug crime incarceration
- offences in or near a school
- offences in a prison
- offences involving a child in the commission of an offence

These amendments are a welcomed aspect of the **balanced approach** that must, in the end, define our collective response to drug crime in Canada. The safety of our police officers, and indeed our citizens in general, depends on our success in implementing just such a balanced approach.

Thank-you!