



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Donald MacPherson, Canadian Drug Policy Coalition Executive Director, receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Vancouver, BC—The BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) has awarded drug policy advocate, Donald MacPherson, with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication to public health, human rights, and drug policy reform. This honour recognizes a passionate and visionary health advocate who has made substantial contributions to the advancement of evidence-based approaches to substance use and addiction.

“Donald has consistently put personal comfort aside to move drug policy forward, helping advance harm reduction and human rights for people who use drugs,” says Dr. Lindsey Richardson, who presented Donald with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the BC Substance Use Conference, organized by the BCCSU. “Just as important as these accomplishments is how he approaches the people he works with as fulsome, complex humans, with hopes and dreams, and challenges and needs.”

The inaugural award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions in health and health policy, and who have demonstrated an enduring personal commitment to the advancement of health equity.

“It is a real honour to receive this award from the BCCSU. It’s quite humbling as there are so many others in British Columbia who have done so much to move us towards a point where we have no choice but to acknowledge our current policies based on criminalization, punishment, and prohibition have been a catastrophic failure,” said Donald MacPherson, Executive Director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition. “It is time for a true public health and human rights response to drugs in this country.”

The Lifetime Achievement Award is awarded to national or international leaders who actively participate in health advocacy and activities at a local, provincial, national, and international level.

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About Donald MacPherson

Donald MacPherson is the Executive Director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition and one of Canada's leading figures in drug policy. He advocates drug policies based on principles of public health, scientific evidence, human rights, and social inclusion. He is involved in drug policy work at local, national, and international levels, and is a founding member of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition.

Formerly, MacPherson was North America's first Drug Policy Coordinator at the City of Vancouver where he worked for 22 years. He is the author of Vancouver's ground-breaking Four Pillars Drug Strategy, which called for new approaches to drug problems based on public health principles and the appropriate regulation of all psychoactive substances. MacPherson is also co-author of *Raise Shit! Social Action Saving Lives* (2009) and *More Harm than Good: Drug Policy in Canada* (2016). In 2007, he received the Kaiser Foundation National Award of Excellence in Public Policy in Canada. In 2009, he was awarded the Richard Dennis Drug Peace Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Drug Policy Reform by the Drug Policy Alliance in the United States, and the City of Vancouver was awarded the Canadian Urban Institutes Secure City Award for the Four Pillars Drug Strategy.

MacPherson also received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2013 for his work in drug policy reform. In 2017, MacPherson was presented with the Nora and Ted Sterling Prize in Support of Controversy at Simon Fraser University.

About the BC Substance Use Conference

The BC Substance Use Conference 2019 is the first annual conference hosted by the BC Centre on Substance Use, bringing together key stakeholders from around the province to discuss provincial efforts to treat and care for people with substance use disorders. This three-day event included research, education, and clinical care guidance presentations and workshops across several topics within substance use, including opioid, alcohol, and cannabis use disorders.

About the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

The Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (CDPC) is a coalition of 70 organizations and 3,000 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 Mental Health and Addiction. 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.