

# Youth drug abuse subject badly abused by adults

(The following is the first in a series of five articles about young people and drugs submitted to the News by Ken Moffatt of Thunder Bay and Dennis Bernardi of Timmins, both of the Addiction Research Foundation.)

The subject of young people and drugs has been badly abused by adults. If we are not surveying teenagers to death in order to determine 'societal trends,' we are either searching out theories which give us easy answers to complex questions (ones that agree with our prejudices) or sweeping the whole issue under the rug, pretending it does not exist.

I'm being unfair. Of course there are adults who face the fact of youth's drug use squarely, who do not react with revulsion to even the thought of their children's experimenting with drugs, who remain open to learning more about substance abuse and what to do about it.

There are even adults who will not confine their search for answers to the time it takes commercials to run during TV viewing.

The issue of young people and drug use is not only an important one, it is also a complicated one. Sometimes the questions are even more complicated than the answers. But

neither the questions nor the answers are so complex as to be beyond understanding and affirmative action.

This series of columns will deal with various aspects of drug use as it relates to young people. It will attempt to bring some clarity to a subject which too often becomes confusing and fearsome to both adults and young people. I sincerely hope that you will feel free to make your concerns and questions known by called 622-0607 or by writing to 104-1265 Arthur Street E., Thunder Bay, P7E 6E7. Your suggestions regarding subjects to be covered in the column are most welcome.

In this area, as is most of Ontario, the most widely used drugs by high school students are alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis, in that order. As of 1985, over 72 per cent of students (grades 7 to 13) had consumed alcohol, over 29 per cent had smoked tobacco, and 25 per cent had used cannabis (ARF 1095 survey).

The lower the grade average, the higher the likelihood of drug use. The use of some drugs, like alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis tended to increase with age, while the use of other substances, like glue and solvents, tended to decrease among older students.

We will be exploring recent trends more closely in future columns, but I think it is important to acknowledge at the outset that

there are several vantage points to consider in examining the issue of youth and drug use.

I suppose the most publicized concern relates to those young people who use drugs to the point where they have very serious problems which require crisis intervention by appropriate helping people. The scarcity of local services related to severely addicted youth makes this a particularly important aspect of the problem.

But we must not forget at least two other groups who need attention, albeit of a different kind. One group consists of those young persons who may not require crisis intervention services but who may be starting to show early signs of developing dependencies. The other group consists of those young people who do not have any problem related to drugs but for whom reinforcement of healthy attitudes and behaviours is important.

All three groups have specific needs. We adults can have an impact in meeting those needs.

In order to arrive at a point where we can develop rational approaches to helping either our own or other people's children who are within these groups, we must have some basic knowledge of the subject at hand.

To make full use of the information, we should try to accept certain rules of thumb:

- (1) Refusal to acknowledge that drug abuse touches all segments of society closes at least part of our minds to learning.
- (2) Our children are growing up in a society that consciously and unconsciously

ly condones the use of drugs for many purposes. (3) Drugs are so readily available to our children that if they choose to, they can obtain them easily. (4) Problems of drug abuse can happen to any family. (5) Many of us are bad ex-

amples to our children when it comes to drug use, and this has an enormous impact on them. (6) It is vital that we examine our own attitudes and prejudices honestly in trying to find out more about the issue of drugs.

In our next column, we will look at some of the most important influences on the attitudes and behaviours of young people.

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A copy of the contract can be obtained from the General Office in the station.

Should you be interested in viewing the premises **please contact Keith McGaughey at 824-2054.** Applications to be forwarded to **Box 219, Schreiber, Ontario. P0T 2S0.**

## Railway exhibit

A photographic exhibit highlighting the growth of Northern Ontario's towns from railway camps to modern communities is now in the middle of a tour of the North Shore area. It made a stop at Schreiber's Public Library during the week of August 20 to 27. On hand to set up the exhibit was Phyllis Campbell, Heritage Officer with the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture's Heritage Branch. The Ontario Heritage Foundation created the exhibit in part to celebrate the centennial of the first transcontinental passenger train and the towns it spawned.

## Minister likes idea

The Ontario government is examining what it calls the "feasible" option of a motor fuels tax reduction to Northern Ontario residents after that option was suggested by Gilles Pouliot, Lake Nipigon MPP, as one way to balance the price of gasoline throughout the province.

In a letter of response to Pouliot from the Minister

of Energy, Vincent Kerrio, Pouliot was told his idea does have "some outstanding concerns" but that it is one of many options that may be considered by the government.

"There is no guarantee that any tax reduction would be passed on to consumers, since prices are set by market forces," Kerrio reminded the Terrace Bay and Schreiber area MPP.

The Minister added that local tax differentials also create problems at the borders of the different zones.

"Residents close to the border feel that their taxes should also be reduced and dealers close to the border are unable to compete with stations a short distance away," Kerrio said in his letter to Pouliot dated August 8.

"Assuming that savings were passed on to consumers, a tax reduction could lower prices to most North-

ern Ontario residents to levels below those in the south," Kerrio explained. "There would also be no effect of closing the price differential between urban and remote markets within the North."

However, Kerrio did admit that Quebec does offer tax concessions to residents of remote areas, which shows that the measure is "certainly feasible, despite the drawbacks I have mentioned. The government is examining this and several other options to narrow the gasoline price differentials between the North and South."

The Minister reminded Pouliot that the ultimate decision on tax matters rests with the Ontario Treasurer and he may have further comments on the MPP's suggestion.

A copy of Kerrio's response was sent to Robert Nixon, Ontario Treasurer.

