



Cannabis legalization

Beverly Thompson of CTV News interviewed the Co-Founder of FAR Canada, Louise Lemieux White, on October 17th, the day Canada legalized recreational cannabis use. Louise shared her family's experience and FAR Canada's views on the legalization of cannabis. The interview can be seen [here](#).



2 ways FAR supports parents

Face-to-Face support group

Last December FAR Canada began a free drop-in support group for parents whose children are struggling with problematic alcohol or other drug use.

Parent to Parent phone support

This program has now been operating for 2 years and has seen impressive positive feedback. In 2018, we supported 39 parents (mostly mothers) of young men (23) and young women (16) aged between 15 and 52. While our callers have primarily come from Ontario, we have also supported families in BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia. In January we trained 7 new parent supporters and now have a total of 14 committed volunteers. Our program could not run without them and we are deeply grateful for their time. If you would like to volunteer and have gone through a journey with your child, please email us at louise@farcanada.org.

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Parent Support Group
for parents whose
children struggle with
substance use

Every 1st and 3rd
Monday of the month
7:00pm to 8:30pm

Drop in
Bellwood Health Services
175 Brentcliffe Road in Leaside, Toronto



FAR Canada at McMaster University

On February 13th FAR Canada's Co-Founder, Louise Lemieux White, presented to medical students at McMaster University on the impact of addiction on the family. It was a great opportunity for medical students to get the perspective of lived experience of family members.

Dr. James MacKillop in response to Louise Lemieux White's heartbreaking and heartwarming story said, *"Addiction is a journey of a thousand miles that starts with one step, & our system needs to support a thousand miles & not just that first step."*

Presentations to Canada Revenue Agency



On February 19th FAR Canada gave presentations to employees of the Canada Revenue Agency at a mini wellness fair. It was a great opportunity for their employees to meet members of FAR Canada, hear their experiences and get valuable data about youth drug use and the impact of addiction on families.

MP Rob Oliphant's Town Hall Meeting



MP Rob Oliphant held a Town Hall meeting on April 14th with the Federal Minister of Health, Ginette Petitpas-Taylor. FAR Canada asked the Minister, *"Families affected by addiction are increasingly frustrated by the lack of coordination among all levels of government to give our loved ones the best chance at recovery from drugs or alcohol misuse.*

We feel that we know what the solutions are but they are not being implemented. What advice do you have for us on how to get a seat at the table to participate in discussions about decriminalisation, harm reduction and better treatment plans for children experiencing co-occurring mental illness and addiction?"

Her response highlighted some of the challenges when dealing with the current opioid crisis, such as stigma, the division of power between the federal and provincial governments, and the differing views on supervised consumption sites, safe supply and the decriminalization of drugs in Canada.



The Minister encouraged FAR Canada to persist in our mission to support and advocate for families. MP Oliphant spoke very fondly about his experiences working with FAR Canada and the tenacity of parents affected by their personal experiences supporting children with problematic substance use.



Meeting with the Provincial Auditor's Office

Good news! The Provincial Auditor of Ontario is conducting a value for money audit of addiction services in Ontario. Four of FAR Canada's volunteers met with them in February. We are grateful for having the opportunity to represent families and outline the barriers to accessible, publicly-funded, timely, compassionate, integrated, evidence-based treatment. We explained that every adjective is an issue today. We look forward to the release of their report in the fall.

A family perspective of stigma and harm reduction

This was the topic of a presentation by FAR Canada's Executive Director, Angie Hamilton, at a conference hosted by the Durham Harm Reduction Coalition on February 28th. Angie started with her journey as the parent of a child who struggles with addiction and is now in recovery. Speaking about lived experience is one of the best ways to tackle stigma. She went on to explain how stigma affects families and concluded that, as a society, we worry about the wrong thing – drugs. Instead, we need to focus on:

- ✓ Harmful drug policies
- ✓ Lack of treatment on demand
- ✓ Lack of harm reduction services
- ✓ Lack of protective health laws

Empowering families affected by substance use problems

Five of FAR Canada's volunteers provided feedback to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health regarding their online educational modules to empower and support families affected by addiction. You can access these helpful educational modules at [here](#).





Education Committee

FAR Canada's Education Committee has been making significant gains with the pharmacy, medical and psychology communities.

Pharmacy news

Our goal of having naloxone kits and signage in all pharmacies across Canada has been met with support. Costco and Walmart are changing their policies as a result of this initiative. Congratulations Doug Hunter, Chair of FAR Canada's Education Committee!

Physician news

Dr. Barb Watts, an ER physician and Member of the Board of FAR Canada, has had two articles published in The Medical Post. One addressed the need to decriminalize drug use and the other educated physicians

about naltrexone and acamprosate, two medications available to reduce cravings for those with alcohol use disorder. Barb has also joined the Opioid Task Force of The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP). We look forward to providing input on how our ER physicians can advocate and improve the treatment of those with opioid use disorder.

Psychologist news

As a result of a meeting with the Canadian Psychologists Association (CPA), the CPA has agreed to build an online program that could be used by all Canadian schools in teaching psychology students about addiction.

Change takes time and FAR Canada is very grateful for the dedication and unflagging commitment of our volunteers who have made these initiatives possible.

Submissions to Health Canada

FAR Canada made submissions to Health Canada regarding:

- ✓ the regulation of sweetened single-serve alcohol beverages (see [here](#)); and
- ✓ the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (CDSS).

Our submission on the CDSS mirrored our advocacy positions which are available on our [website](#).



TDSB event

FAR Canada volunteers attended the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Parents as Partners Event on March 30th. It was a great opportunity for FAR Canada to promote our parent support programs to parents and TDSB staff. The event also provided us with an opportunity to discuss some of the misconceptions about cannabis legalization and other illegal drugs to those in attendance.

Want to volunteer? Share your story of recovery?

Please reach out to us at
info@farcanada.org

www.farcanada.org

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