



# MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**To the Senate**

**by**

**Senator the Honourable Kathy Lynn Simmons, JP  
Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs**

**Release of the 2018 Annual Report of the  
Bermuda Drug Information Network (BerDIN)**

*Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2019*

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**Madame President:**

The 2018 Annual Report of the Bermuda Drug Information Network (BerDIN) is the seventh major report of the Network. The report documents and highlights a time series of drug-related data, comparing information for the years 2016 and 2017. It provides a comprehensive tabular representation of the drug situation in Bermuda under the following themes:

- Criminal and Suspicious Activities
- Imports, Exports, and Licensing

- Training for Intervention ProcedureS (TIPS)
- Substance Abuse Treatment and Counselling
- Drug Screening Surveillance
- Impaired Driving
- Health
- Drug Prevention Programmes
- Certified Professionals
- Survey Data
- Financing Drug Control

**Madame President**, historically, drug use is a difficult and complex phenomenon to monitor. This report serves the purpose of providing a comprehensive overview of the current drug situation in Bermuda using multiple sources and indicators, with the intent of providing insight into the different aspects of the drug problem. By and large, the BerDIN Annual Report monitors and accounts for local drug-related information from approximately eighteen (18) agencies/departments that deal with drug-related data including: treatment, prevention, interdiction and enforcement agencies.

**Madame President**, the BerDIN, which is made up of all institutions that collect drug-related information, has a major role in

the drug demand and supply reduction efforts in Bermuda. In particular, the members of the BerDIN are:

1. Bermuda Hospitals Board
  - i. King Edward VII Memorial Hospital
  - ii. Turning Point Substance Abuse Programme
2. Bermuda Police Service
3. Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Authority
4. Counselling and Life Skills Services
5. CADA
6. Department of Corrections
  - i. Westgate Correctional Facility
  - ii. Right Living House
7. Department of Court Services
  - i. Bermuda Assessment and Referral Centre
  - ii. Drug Treatment Court
8. Department of Health
  - i. Central Government Laboratory
  - ii. Epidemiology and Surveillance

9. Department for National Drug Control
  - i. Men's Treatment
  - ii. Research and Policy Unit
  - iii. Women's Treatment Centre
10. Financial Intelligence Agency
11. HM Customs
12. Liquor License Authority
13. Supreme Court

**Madame President,** BerDIN is the central source of comprehensive information on drug consumption and drug abuse in Bermuda because of its multi-disciplinary approach. In this regard, the Department for National Drug Control (DNDC) collects, analyses, and disseminates reliable, valid, and comparable information using well established methodologies. By extension, this report provides audiences with an evidence-based picture of the drug phenomenon at the national level. A report such as this may be used as a catalyst for raising awareness of the drug situation; its associated problems; and should guide the development of education, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programmes, while improving existing systems.

**Madame President,** since the last report of the BerDIN (2017), cannabis and alcohol remain the most widely used drugs on the Island. The good news is that crime continues to decline, notably there has been a decrease over the past year in alcohol and drug related crimes. Poly drug use remains ever present; especially amongst persons involved in the criminal justice system, who reported using some combination of crack cocaine, opiates, and marijuana.

**Madame President,** assessments done by the Bermuda Assessment and Referral Centre (BARC) continue to show that opiates, alcohol, heroin, cocaine, and cannabis remained the primary substances of choice amongst the 530 persons who sought treatment services for the past two years. There was also a significant increase in the number of persons who sought treatment for cannabis (16.3.0% increase) and alcohol in 2017 (6.1% increase). Further, many of these persons have met the clinical criteria for dependence or abuse (problems related to their use) of such substances. When it came to clinical diagnosis, 56 or 34.8% of all clients in 2016 and 67 or 43.8% in 2017 were classified as having “substantial” to “severe” substance abuse dependence. The majority of persons referred for substance abuse treatment in 2017 were male (82.3%), repeat cases

(67.4%), identified themselves as “Black” (56.1%) and were between the age of 31-45 years (21.3%).

**Madame President**, the drug market is still very much active in Bermuda as persons who sought drug treatment, or have been offenders of the law, have reported that their primary drug of choice remains available and accessible. For two consecutive years, there has been a decrease in criminal trials for offences such as cannabis possession (66 in 2016 and 56 in 2017) and cocaine possession with intent to supply (10 in 2016, 3 in 2017); as well as for increases in cultivating cannabis. There were less seizures of cash in 2017 from Financial Crimes, section 50 of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) 1997, (36 in 2016 and 13 in 2017), cash seizures and forfeiture being the main categories of seizure with a much less corresponding dollar value then seen in 2016. Other categories include civil recovery orders and confiscations.

**Madame President**, although there were fewer seizures of synthetic drugs in 2017, the Bermuda Police Service continued to interdict synthetics in addition to seizing a large amount of cannabis edibles and plants during 2017. There were two seizures of synthetic cathinone derivatives, a chemical stimulant found in products marketed as bath salts. For the first time during 2017, the

government lab reports that 778.8 grams of cannabis edibles were seized. Law enforcement and the criminal justice system are still, in many ways, not in a position to deal effectively with controlling the drug market, with factors such as, outdated legislation and the lack of adequate resources to keep up with the ever changing forms/types of substances and the ability to enforce current laws, continuing to make supply reduction more challenging.

**Madame President,** with regard to demand reduction activities, in 2017, there were 101 new clients that were evaluated for substance abuse, 82 of which entered one of six treatment programs on Island. Funding continues to affect the number of clients enrolled in treatment services and, by extension, a number of persons seeking care were unable to get into treatment, while others waited for longer periods than usual. Demand and supply reduction agencies remained at level funding throughout 2017, whilst funding for transitional housing for FOCUS was restored. The balance between demand and supply reduction cannot occur unless interdiction agencies have sufficient funds to execute operations, secure necessary equipment, and have available the training and technical assistance for their officers.

**Madame President,** the year 2017 saw the continued existence of a treatment gap for persons seeking a substance abuse

assessment. While a person may go through assessment he/she may not follow through with the recommended level of care, leaving a “treatment gap” between the persons needing and receiving treatment. An understanding and knowledge of substance users and abusers who are not in care is limited. More information is required on how to access this specific population to determine its needs.

**Madame President**, the DNDC hosted a meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, to share the compiled data with all of the BerDIN Members and other relevant stakeholders.

**Madame President**, these are only a few of the highlights from the 2018 BerDIN Annual Report. I encourage you to review this report at your convenience for a more in-depth account. This annual publication is a principal source of information for a wide range of audiences including policy-makers and their advisors, professionals and researchers working in drug-related fields, and more broadly, the media and general public. This is an annual initiative, which presents a yearly overview and update of the drug phenomenon in Bermuda. This report can be considered an essential reference publication for those seeking the latest findings on drugs in Bermuda.

**Madame President**, as global experience has shown, neither supply reduction nor demand reduction, on its own, is able to solve the drug problem. For this reason, a more balanced approach in dealing with the pervasive drug problem is a necessity. This includes more serious prevention and treatment efforts, not only in terms of policy, but also in terms of funds dedicated to these purposes to ensure programming meets the needs of the community.

**Madame President**, drugs continue to jeopardize the health and welfare of people throughout the world, and Bermuda is no exception. Now more than before, drug misuse and abuse represent a clear threat to the stability and security of Bermuda and to its economic and social development. Drugs have become a deeply ingrained part of our daily lives and prevention cannot occur unless there is change in our social attitudes toward alcohol and drug misuse. This Government is committed to a healthier and safer Bermuda with an interconnected re-balancing of drug control efforts. With the renewal of the national drug policy, the National Drug Control Master Plan 2019-2023, government will be in a better position to impact the local drug situation.

**Thank you, Madame President**