



Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Supporting police professionals through innovative and inclusive police leadership to advance the safety and security of all Canadians.

April 29, 2024

CACP Statement: British Columbia decision to make the consumption of illicit drugs illegal in public spaces

On Friday April 26, British Columbia (BC) Premier David Eby announced plans to make illicit drug use illegal in all public spaces (hospitals, restaurants, transit, parks, and beaches).

The CACP supports this decision as an essential solution to address the inappropriate public consumption that has generated significant public concern and led to public disturbances and disorder in BC.

We reaffirm our support for a health-centered approach to address the opioid crisis, including the decriminalization of possession of illicit substances for personal use.

Preliminary results of BC's pilot project to decriminalize drugs for personal use has proven what police leaders have stated from the beginning: decriminalization of drugs for personal use is only one part of an integrated health-focused approach to addressing the opioid crisis and toxic drug supply in Canada.

We believe in a multifaceted approach to substance use that includes prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and supply reduction. Prevention is about minimizing the number of Canadians developing substance use disorders. Harm reduction is about minimizing the number of Canadians dying from overdose. Treatment is about minimizing the number of Canadians living with substance use disorders on an ongoing basis. Supply reduction is about disrupting the illicit supply of harmful and toxic substances coming into our communities by targeting organized crime groups and individuals who import, produce, or distribute illegal drugs.

As police leaders, public safety is our primary concern. The public consumption of illicit drugs in public spaces has unnecessarily exposed individuals, and especially youth, to products, practices and behaviours that are considered to be undesirable by a strong proportion of the population in communities across the country.

A comprehensive and multifaceted framework for responding to the overdose crisis is required to ensure that public health outcomes are advanced while maintaining and maximizing public safety.

We remain committed to a compassionate and health-led approach that supports people living with substance use disorders, while also addressing the very real concerns in our communities related to problematic drug use. Police enforcement of the law will continue to involve officer discretion and will be done in consideration of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada Guideline 5.13 that clearly sets out the rare circumstances under which the Crown will approve charges for simple possession.

The right to possess and consume legal amounts of illicit drugs can never supersede the right for other Canadians to feel safe and comfortable in public spaces within their community.

[Click here](#) to access a copy of the CACP's submission to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Health on April 15, 2024, as part of their study of the opioid epidemic and toxic drug crisis in Canada.