



Federal government approves decriminalization changes

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The federal government has **approved** the Province of BC's request to further control consumption of illicit drugs in public spaces. The change took place immediately as of May 7, 2024. Possession of small amounts of illicit drugs is still permitted.

The Province issued its **request** on April 26, asking Health Canada to make it illegal to use illicit drugs in all public spaces, including inside hospitals, on transit, and in parks. With this change, police now have the ability to ask users to leave an area, seize drugs when necessary, or arrest a person if required.

In its statement about the request, the Province indicated that, "Guidance will be given to police to only arrest for simple possession of illicit drugs in exceptional circumstances."

The Province also requested that the use of illicit drugs continue to be allowed in private residences, health care clinics that provide outpatient addictions services such as Rapid Access Addictions Clinics, sanctioned overdose prevention sites, including those operated by housing providers, as well as drug checking sites, and to people lawfully sheltering overnight.

Prior to this latest change, the possession of illegal drugs was not allowed near playgrounds, spray pools, wading pools, skate parks; on K-12 school premises, on child care facility premises, in airports, in watercraft, and in motor vehicles.

UBCM members have expressed concerns about the public use of illicit drugs, and endorsed resolution [2023-SR4](#), which asked the provincial government to further regulate the possession and use of illicit drugs in parks, beaches, sports fields, and bus stops where children also gather. More information is available on the [UBCM website](#).

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