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# Statement from the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health

From: [Health Canada](#)

## Statement

*British Columbia's exemption will now prohibit possession of controlled substances in public spaces*

May 7, 2024 | Ottawa, Ontario | Health Canada

In 2021, the Government of British Columbia requested the launch of a pilot project to help address the overdose crisis that is one of the most serious and unprecedented public health threats in Canada's recent history. BC has asked that we make amendments to its project and we are granting BC's request to prohibit possession of controlled substances in public spaces.

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their communities. Law enforcement also needs to have additional tools to address issues of public safety while continuing to take a compassionate and public health approach to addressing substance use harms.

Working together, we can continue to adapt and adjust our approach to reflect the evidence and what is actually working on the ground. Going forward, we will continue working hand in hand with all of our partners including provincial

jurisdictions, law enforcement, Indigenous communities, people with lived and living experience, and municipalities across this country every step of the way.

Exemptions will continue to apply in private residences, healthcare clinics as designated by the province of BC, places where people are lawfully sheltering, and overdose prevention and drug checking sites.

Across Canada we must prevent overdoses and save lives, and help people find their way to appropriate treatment and pathways to recovery, while keeping our communities safe and addressing drug trafficking and organized crime.

The Honourable Ya'ara Saks, P.C., M.P.

### **Associated Links:**

- Backgrounder: [Personal possession of small amounts of certain illegal drugs in British Columbia](#)

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