



# Public Concerns

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While public drug use was common before decriminalization, there are mounting concerns about public use, particularly in child and family-focused spaces.

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Police are routinely called when people are using drugs in public and have indicated they do not currently have authority to address these concerns.

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Some local governments have implemented or are considering bylaws to regulate public drug use.

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The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG) consulted with stakeholders throughout June and July and is seeking policy direction on the scope of potential legislation.

# KEY POLICY QUESTIONS

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Where should public drug use be restricted? Why?

02

Are there places where public drug use should not be restricted? Why?

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Should there be differentiation based on the mode of use?

04

What should enforcement look like?

# Consultations

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**Decriminalization Core Planning Table**

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**Public Health**

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**First Nations, Métis, Indigenous organizations**

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**Police**

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**Paramedics**

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**Local governments**

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**Coalition of Organizations by/for People who use Drugs**

# Themes

- Recognition that addiction is a public health rather than a criminal justice issue. The risk of overdose and death remains very high.
- Compassion for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges and a desire for appropriate care and support.
- Concern from some that people who use drugs are seen as a nuisance, rather than members of our community who need compassion and support.
- Concern that public support for decriminalization and harm reduction are waning.
- Concern that public use restrictions may undermine the goals of decriminalization and harm reduction.
- Frustration over insufficient and/or culturally inappropriate housing options, social supports, and substance use treatment and recovery options.

# Themes

- Frustration that there are restrictions on public use of other substances but not for decriminalized drugs.
- Concern about the deterioration of public spaces, particularly in town and city centres.
- Communities have different experiences (urban/rural, availability of OPS).
- View that local bylaws still have a role given the different circumstances, needs, and capacities of different communities.
- Recognition that public drug use restrictions are likely to have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous Peoples.

# Local government concerns

- Lack of treatment options; need for investments in system of care
- Public safety
- Community standards
- Impacts on children, seniors, and other vulnerable people
- Impacts on businesses
- Theft, vandalism, and other criminal activity
- Erratic/aggressive behaviours while intoxicated
- Drug use becoming normalized
- Perceptions drug use is migrating from areas where it had historically been accepted into areas frequented by children, families, tourists, etc.
- Discarded drug paraphernalia, human waste, and litter
- Frustration from a lack of response and/or the inability for police to respond
- Growing conflicts between people who use drugs and other community members, or between each other

*Note: Drug use is one of many contributing factors. These concerns expressed are related to range of other factors such as homelessness, poverty, access to appropriate addiction care, lack of other options to use drugs.*

# where should public use be restricted?

- Reasonably broad support for prohibiting use in playgrounds, splash pads, and skate parks.
- Diverse perceptions around parks, beaches, and sports fields - recognition that many of these places are multi-purpose and some may be more appropriate for use.
- Acknowledgement that some parks are used for sheltering.
- Public transit stops are an area of concern, particularly for children, youth and seniors.
- Concerns about obstruction of access to businesses.
- Not many options for vulnerable people to use drugs safely.
- Overdose prevention sites can be a good option, but don't always meet the need.

# compliance and enforcement

- Preference for a progressive education, resource referral, and redirection approach.
- Almost no support for a ticketing approach.
- Concerns about impact of seizure/arrest.
- Recognition that some consequence must be available for those who refuse to comply with warnings.
- Ideally, compliance is the goal and enforcement is the exception.
- Varying and polarized views on the potential role of local government bylaws.



# Things to consider...

- We want to protect the safety of people who use drugs while also addressing community concerns around public drug use. The number of overdose deaths in B.C. is unacceptable.
- Broad prohibition on public drug use is not desirable or realistic. Many people who use drugs in public places are highly vulnerable and have limited options for where they can use.
- Public drug use laws will not solve broader social issues.





**Thank you**