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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 5/31/2022 12:45:12 PM
Subject: [Decriminalization Key Messages](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

As you are aware, the federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health announced today the granting of a three-year exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) to remove criminal penalties for people who possess a small amount of certain illicit substances for personal use. This exemption was requested by the Province of BC will be in effect from Jan. 31, 2023 to Jan. 31, 2026. The exemption will apply throughout British Columbia.

The City's request for an exemption under the CDSA has not been decided by the Minister, although issuance the Province-wide exemption raises an obvious question regarding the practicality of the City's submission.

This exemption is not legalization. Adults who have 2.5 grams or less of the certain illicit substances for personal use will no longer be subject to arrest, charge or to having their drugs seized. Instead, police will offer information on available health and social supports and will help with referrals when requested.

Should you receive inquiries on the matter, the following are a few key messages that may be helpful:

- The City submitted [a final proposal](#) to Health Canada in May 2021 requesting an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) under the provision of section 56(1).
- The City thanks the Province for helping champion the cause via a subsequent submission to Health Canada in November 2022 that encompassed the entire province.
- Decriminalization of illicit drug possession is vital to reduce the stigma associated with substance use and encourage people to access lifesaving harm reduction and treatment services
- The City of Vancouver views Health Canada's decision to decriminalize simple possession of illicit drugs as a important step forward in responding to the overdose crisis. Decriminalization helps send the message that substance use is a public health issue, not a criminal justice issue.
- The City of Vancouver is committed to Four Pillars Drug Strategy and will continue advocating for safe supply treatment options and prevention
- In addition to working with the Province, Health Canada, Vancouver Coastal Health, and many partners including people with lived experience on implementing decriminalization in the coming months, the City continues to support community-based initiatives including the work of the Vancouver Community Action Team, as well as frontline workers and peers, first responders, and harm reduction services, as part of our ongoing commitment to end the overdose crisis. To date, [BC Coroners Service](#) indicates 2,331 have died since 2016 (March 2022 data).

If you have further questions please email Sandra Singh Sandra.singh@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and s̱əḻilw̱əta̱ł (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.