

June 14, 2022

Honourable David Lametti,
Minister of Justice
Government of Canada

Dear Minister Lametti

Re: BC Decision to Decriminalize of Small Amounts of Street Drugs

The members of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) view with interest the decision of our Federal Government to accept the formal request of the Provincial Government of British Columbia to decriminalize possession of small amounts of illegal substances (street drugs).

The announcement is certainly a first step in addressing what has been called a crisis of massive proportion. Aimed at reducing stigma and preventing death, it inches away at many decades of prohibition and harmful practices within the system.

Our members urge you to encourage all provinces to adopt comprehensive strategies to address problematic substance abuse as a means to alleviating distressing statistics. Several issues that must be addressed without delay include safe supply, access to treatment and harm reduction modeled on credible standards of treatment for drug abuse, and the regulation of hard drugs.

Most experts, including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, agree that arresting people has proven ineffective in preventing serious consequences, and drug use should be addressed as a public health issue rather than a justice issue. It is difficult to disagree with this assessment.

While this is a long overdue and cautious attempt that in many ways falls short of what is needed, it is to be applauded as a positive attempt to stem the tide of deaths. The necessary changes to the Criminal Code and Controlled Drugs and Substance Act to ensure this is possible must be taken immediately. This can no longer be tolerated in our country.

Sincerely
Patricia Leson, President
National Council of Women of Canada

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Canada is the traditional territory of Indigenous and Metis People. We are grateful to join with others in peace and hope, advocating for an improved quality of life for women, children, families, and society.

Note: The original draft of this letter was prepared by Monica Cullum, NCWC Justice Convenor.

C: Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health
Honourable Marc Millar, Minister of Indigenous Services
Honourable Marci Ien, Minister Women, Gender Equality and Youth
Michelle Remple-Garner, MP Conservative Critic Health
Rob Moore, MP Conservative Critic Justice

Gary Vidal, MP Conservative Critic Indigenous Relations
Karen Vecchio, MP, Women, Gender Equality and Youth
Don Davies, MP NDP Critic, Health
Niki Ashton, MP NDP Indigenous Services
Randal Garison, NDP MP Critic Justice
Lindsey Mathyssen, MP NDP Critic, Women, Gender Equality and Youth