

FEDERAL ACTIONS ON OPIOIDS TO DATE

Recent federal actions

- [Budget 2023](#) proposes to provide an additional \$359.2 million over 5 years to support a renewed Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (CDSS). This builds on the more than \$800 million invested since 2017 to address the overdose crisis
- Budget 2023 also delivers an urgent, needed investment of almost \$200 billion over the next 10 years to strengthen our public health care system and help ensure Canadians receive the care they need. This includes \$25 billion for shared health priorities, including increasing access to mental health and substance use services and supports. These significant federal investments will support access to a full continuum of evidence-based options as well as innovative strategies, including harm reduction, treatment and recovery, for people who use drugs
- Released the most recent [national data](#) on opioid- and stimulant-related deaths, hospitalizations and Emergency Medical Services response in collaboration with the provinces and territories
- Published “[Spotlight: The Emergence of Xylazine in Canada](#)”, a report about the emergence of Xylazine (a prescription drug for use in veterinary medicine) that is increasing being seen in the toxic illegal drug supply
- Held a Best Brains Exchange to enhance and share knowledge related to best practices and treatment options for people living with chronic pain and concurrent mental illnesses and/or substance use-related conditions

Government funding



- Committed over \$1 billion since 2017 to increase access to evidence-based treatment and harm reduction services; fund awareness, prevention, and stigma reduction activities; and support research and surveillance initiatives to inform our response. This includes funding projects through the [Substance Use and Addictions Program](#) to support people who use drugs, for example by:
 - Supporting [projects related to treatment](#) including expanding Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) services
 - Supporting prescriber led [safer supply](#) service delivery projects to help save lives by providing people at risk of overdose with prescribed medications instead of the toxic and unpredictable illegal drug supply
 - Supporting a National Safer Supply Community of Practice and research/knowledge transfer and exchange projects, to help gather and share the evidence around safer supply
 - Increasing [awareness and access to naloxone](#) through projects that provide training, awareness and distribution of the life saving drug
 - Helping to [reduce stigma and support families affected by the overdose crisis](#)
 - Improving [harm reduction initiatives](#) to reach key groups, including Indigenous peoples, youth, post-secondary students, individuals in the correctional system, and healthcare professionals
 - Providing better access to peer support and capacity-building [projects](#) to support those disproportionately affected by substance use or who face barriers accessing services
 - Supporting projects addressing priority actions identified by the [Canadian Pain Task Force](#)
- Provided funding through the [Supporting Pathways to Care for People Who Use Drugs program](#) for projects that support sustainable system-level change to help people access care and reduce barriers
- Supported provinces/territories to improve access to treatment services by providing \$150 million via the [Emergency Treatment Fund](#) which, when cost-matched by provinces/territories, totals over \$300 million
- Providing up to \$4.5 million over 5 years to support [Pain Canada](#), a national initiative that brings together 14 pain organizations to support national coordination and mobilize resources to build capacity to improve systems of care and supports for people with pain
- Providing over \$650 million in 2022-2023 to support culturally grounded community-based mental wellness initiatives which includes funding for substance use prevention and treatment, mental wellness teams, the [Hope for Wellness Help Line](#), and more

Enforcement and the toxic illegal drug supply



- Granted a [three-year exemption](#) under the [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act](#) (CDSA), so that adults (18+) in British Columbia will not be subject to criminal charges for the possession of up to 2.5 grams of certain illegal drugs for personal use between January 31, 2023 and January 31, 2026
- Former [Bill C-5](#) came into force and repealed mandatory minimum penalties for all drug offences in the [CDSA](#) and requires police and prosecutors to consider diversion for simple drug possession offences. It also requires past and future convictions for simple drug possession to be sequestered apart after a certain period of time
- Made [scheduling amendments](#) to the [CDSA](#) and [Precursor Control Regulations](#) to help address the illegal importation and distribution of a group of novel fentanyl precursors that are used in the illegal production of fentanyl and its analogues. These scheduling changes will take effect on August 30, 2023
- Released [guidance](#) to consider alternatives to prosecution for simple drug possession offences, except when there are serious public safety concerns
- Identified opioids, including Nitazenes, 121,987 times from January 2018 to April 2023 in [exhibits](#) submitted to the [Drug Analysis Service](#) by law enforcement and public health officials (exhibits may contain more than one opioid)
- [Seizing illegal opioids and precursor chemicals](#) that can be used in the production of illegal synthetic drugs
- Providing [border services officers with tools to safely identify and interdict fentanyl and other toxic substances](#) at the border, including:
 - Implementing 81 safe examination areas at high-risk ports of entry to help identify and examine shipments suspected to contain opioids
 - Maintaining field drug analysis sites with on-site chemists in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver
 - Added fentanyl detection to the scent profile of 6 drug and firearm detector dog teams strategically located across the country
- Working with private sector partners to address [money laundering of the proceeds of fentanyl trafficking](#)
- Continuing to investigate and charge criminal actors suspected of diverting chemical products for the purpose of manufacturing illicit substances

Access to treatment



- Supported the development of guidance for health care providers, including:
 - [Clinical guidelines \(PDF document\)](#) and [operational guidance \(PDF document\)](#) for injectable opioid agonist treatment
 - [National treatment guidelines for opioid use disorders](#)
- Removed barriers to accessing drugs used for the treatment of opioid use disorder by:
 - Issuing a [class exemption](#) for patients, practitioners, and pharmacists prescribing and providing controlled substances in Canada to ensure continuity of care
 - Approving [injectable hydromorphone](#) and [diacetylmorphine](#) as treatment options for patients with severe opioid use disorder
 - Facilitating the prescribing and dispensing of methadone and diacetylmorphine through [regulatory amendments](#)
- Developing [national standards](#) based deliverables for mental health and substance use services to provide an evidence-based framework for service delivery
- Supporting federally-funded treatment centres for First Nations and Inuit to create and enhance their virtual treatment services, allowing for increased reach and accessibility to those who may not otherwise seek treatment
- Supporting Opioid Agonist Therapy wraparound supports in 78 First Nations and Inuit Communities
- Increasing the provision of [opioid agonist treatment](#) and [implementing SMART \(Self-Management and Recovery Training\)](#) in Canada's correctional institutions

Access to harm reduction



- Supported the establishment of [supervised consumption sites \(SCS\)](#) in areas where there are high rates of public drug use to provide health, social and treatment services
 - Authorized different modes of consumption that include injection, oral (swallowing), intranasal (snorting) and inhalation
 - Authorized supportive services at sites including drug checking and peer assistance consumption
 - Streamlined the exemption application process
 - As of March 2023:
 - there are 38 SCS offering services
 - over 4.1 million visits since October 2017
 - reversed over 47,000 overdoses
 - made over 239,000 referrals to health and social services
- Improved access to overdose prevention services by allowing provinces and territories to establish temporary spaces where people can consume drugs under supervision to reduce risk of overdose death
- Supported the [Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act](#), which provides some legal protection for people who seek emergency help during an overdose
- Continued to improve access to naloxone, including to remote and isolated First Nations and Inuit communities and people experiencing homelessness, through the coordination of bulk purchases of naloxone and nasal spray naloxone, increasing access to take-home naloxone kits, and training in their use
- Supported a [drug checking technology challenge](#) to promote development of new drug checking technologies, which included [awarding a grand prize](#) of \$1 million to Scatr Inc.
- Opened the first [Overdose Prevention Service](#) in a correctional institution to reduce overdose incidents
- Continuing to support the delivery of harm reduction activities to help reduce risks and connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness with health and social services via the [Reaching Home](#) program

Awareness and prevention



- Expanded public awareness around [opioids](#) and the harms of [substance use stigma](#):
 - Launched a multi-year campaign to raise awareness of opioids, how to respond to an overdose, the [Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act](#) and the [impacts of stigma](#) on people who use drugs
 - Continued a [campaign aimed at men working in trades](#), who are disproportionately affected by the overdose crisis, to promote help-seeking and link to resources and supports
 - Developed and distributed [awareness resources for opioids](#), such as videos, fact sheets, posters
 - Delivered the [Know More Opioids awareness program](#) to more than 1,400 in-person and virtual high school sessions, 68 post-secondary school events, 43 events/festivals; and engaged over 175,000 people; and placed awareness products in high-traffic areas of 16 post-secondary institutions
 - Reached out to over 2000 festival organizers to provide information about naloxone and encourage the distribution of overdose prevention materials to event goers and staff
- Coordinate federal efforts to respond to the [Canadian Pain Task Force](#) recommendations, so that pain is understood, prevented, and effectively treated and supported knowledge mobilization of stakeholder developed guidance and resources to improve pain management, for example the [Pediatric pain management standard](#); [Power over pain portal](#); and [competency-based curriculum](#)
- Supported the development of [Soar Above Stigma](#), a resource that provides outreach support and stigma education for Indigenous community members dealing with addiction or mental health issues
- Shared best practices for addressing [substance use stigma within the Canadian health system](#), including through use of [compassionate and non-stigmatizing language](#)
- Continued engagement activities with law enforcement community to promote uptake of an online [Drug Stigma Awareness Training module](#) with free access extended to law enforcement members until December 31, 2023
- Developed a [toolkit](#) of resources for employers of Canadians working in the trades and related industries to help reduce the harms of substance use
- Developed a [Blueprint for Action](#) and [policy paper](#) for schools and community organizations that support youth, outlining practical approaches for schools to prevent substance-related harms among youth
- Adopted non-stigmatizing language in Health Services products and reviewing staff training and education aimed at reducing substance-related stigma in Canada's correctional system

Evidence



- Held a Knowledge Exchange Series on [Safer Supply](#) with key stakeholders to discuss evidence around safer supply and how available evidence can help support and scale up successful models then published a report entitled "[What We Heard: Knowledge Exchange Series on Safer Supply](#)"
- Updated [modelling projections](#) on opioid-related deaths to the end of 2023 to understand and plan for potential scenarios
- Renewed [\\$17 million investment](#) in research to address substance use in Canada to ensure the continuation and expansion of the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM) research and knowledge mobilization activities focused on substance use harms, such as opioids
- [Invested \\$2.8 million over 5 years](#) to support an independent, scientific evaluation led by CRISM of the impacts of the section 56 exemption in British Columbia
- Continued collection of the [Canadian Wastewater Survey](#) with information on drugs and [drug metabolites in wastewater](#) samples collected
- Established an [Expert Task Force on Substance Use](#) that provided independent, expert recommendations on the federal government's drug policy and potential alternatives to criminal penalties for personal possession
- Published a [toolkit](#) with resources for stakeholders to respond to a need for information on medications for people at risk of overdose during the pandemic
- Funded a [qualitative assessment](#) of 10 safer supply projects through surveys and interviews with safer supply program leads, staff and participants to capture early learnings, including effective strategies for program delivery
- Invested over \$2 million to [evaluate program implementation and impacts of safer supply pilot projects](#) and to assess the public health impacts of supervised consumption sites located in [British Columbia](#), [the Prairies](#), [Ontario](#) and [Quebec-Atlantic](#) (A summary of findings from the SCSs evaluation projects is available in the [end-of-grant workshop report](#))
- Released several [reports](#) related to furthering knowledge around opioids