HRCS & Decriminalization-related Policy Timeline

2022 HRCS
Data collection and entry

Nov 2022 - Jan 2023

2022 HRCS
Data analysis and dissemination

Jan 2023 - May 2023

2023 HRCS
Data collection and entry

Dec 2023 - Mar 2024

2023 HRCS
Data analysis and dissemination

Mar 2024 - Jul 2024

2022

May 31, 2022

BC Government Request Approved

Exemption to s.56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act granted by Health Canada.

2023

Jan 31, 2023

Implementation of Exemption s. 56 in BC

Decriminalized personal possession up to 2.5 g cumulative of certain drugs (opioids, crack and powdered cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA) in BC for individuals 18+ years old. Exemption to be in effect until Jan 31, 2026 (3 years).

Possession not permitted in:

- K-12 school premises;
- Licensed childcare facility premises;
- Airports, Canadian Coast Guard vessels and helicopters;
- Motor vehicle/watercraft operated by a minor or when illegal substances are within reach.

Sep 8, 2023

Amendment to s.56 Exemption

Possession not permitted within 15 meters of playgrounds spray parks, wading pools, skate parks.

Nov 8, 2023

BC Legislature Discusses Bill 34

Bill 34-2023: Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act passes in BC legislature - but is not yet enacted. Bill prohibits consumption of illegal substances in public spaces and authorized police to direct individuals to stop using illegal substances and/or to seize illegal substances.

Three days later, the Harm Reduction Nurses Association asks BC Supreme Court to declare Bill 34 unconstitutional under the Charter.

2024

Dec 29, 2023

BC Supreme Court Ruling Postpones Bill 34

BC Supreme Court grants temporary injunction to Bill 34, suspending it from going into effect until March 31, 2024 (later extended until end of June 2024).

May 7, 2024

Amendment to s.56 Exemption

Possession only permitted:

- Private residences, places unhoused individuals are legally sheltering (indoor and outdoor locations, according to local bylaws);
- Designated overdose prevention, drug checking and supervised consumption sites;
- Designated health care clinics that provide out patient addiction services (i.e., rapid access clinics, OAT clinics).