

Federal actions on the overdose crisis

About the overdose crisis

The **overdose crisis and toxic illegal drug supply** continues to have significant impacts on Canadian families and communities. A number of factors are contributing to Canada's high rates of overdoses, such as:

- + A highly toxic and unpredictable illegal drug supply
- + Barriers to accessing services and supports, including harm reduction, treatment and recovery
- + Stigma and misinformation surrounding substance use

The Government of Canada is committed to a comprehensive public health and safety approach – focused on connecting people to vital services, destigmatization, and supporting prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Highlights of recent federal actions

- + Announced Bill C-2, the **Strong Borders Act**, to ensure law enforcement has the right tools to keep the borders secure, combat transnational organized crime, stop the flow of illegal fentanyl, and crack down on money laundering
- + Appointed a **Fentanyl Czar** responsible for working with all levels of the Canadian government and with U.S. counterparts to advance efforts to stop the production and trafficking of illegal fentanyl
- + Released **Canada's Border Plan** with a \$1.3 billion investment to stop illegal fentanyl at the border, including:
 - + \$30.7 million to launch a Precursor Chemical Risk Management Unit, to strengthen Canada's ability to support law and border enforcement
 - + \$48 million to establish the Canadian Drug Analysis Centre, significantly expanding Canada's drug testing lab capacity and analysis capabilities through new dedicated lab spaces in Toronto and Vancouver
- + Provided \$150 million for the **Emergency Treatment Fund (ETF)** for municipalities and Indigenous communities. It aims to provide a rapid response to emergent, critical needs related to the illegal toxic drug and overdose crisis. A list of ETF funded projects can be found [here](#)
- + An additional \$1 billion for **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy** to stabilize funding under the program, bringing the total investment to \$5 billion. Of this, \$50 million will focus on accelerating community-level reductions in homelessness
- + \$250 million to address the urgent issue of encampments and unsheltered homelessness

Snapshot of the overdose crisis

- + Since 2016, opioid-related harms have led to:
 - + over 52,544 deaths
 - + over 48,108 hospitalizations
 - + over 198,811 emergency department visits
 - + over 244,927 emergency medical services responses to suspected overdoses
- + About 3 out of 4 of opioid-related deaths were among men
- + 74% of opioid-related deaths in 2024 involved fentanyl
- + Most deaths occurred in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, with high rates also in Manitoba and Yukon

Securing the Border and Disrupting Fentanyl

Through **Canada's Border Plan**, the federal government is delivering on its commitments to strengthen the border, including the detection and disruption of the fentanyl trade. Early progress includes:

- + Strengthening cross-border cooperation and data-sharing with the U.S. through new partnerships, including a **North American Joint Strike Force**
- + Listing seven cartels as terrorist entities
- + Targeting illegal precursor chemicals used to make fentanyl through surveillance, regulation and enforcement, including an emergency order to rapidly control three fentanyl precursors in 2025
- + Working with China to stop the shipment of precursors to Canada
- + Building the Canadian Drug Analysis Center to support law enforcement
- + Deploying advanced technology and 10,000 border personnel to intercept illegal drugs

Connecting people to vital services

The Government of Canada has committed significant funding to address the illegal toxic drug and overdose crisis.

Examples of key federal investments:

- + \$25 billion through the **Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians** to support improving access to quality mental health and substance use services. Additionally, \$2 billion over 10 years to support Indigenous health initiatives
- + Over \$750 million through the **Substance Use and Addiction Program** for more than 460 innovative community-based pilot projects since 2017, including:
 - + Medication-assisted therapies for people with opioid use disorder, including opioid agonist therapy (OAT)
 - + Helping **reduce stigma and supporting families affected by the crisis**
 - + **Initiatives** to reach key groups, including Indigenous peoples, youth, individuals in the correctional system, and healthcare professionals
 - + Improving access to **peer support and capacity-building projects**
 - + **Chronic pain initiatives**, including \$4.5 million over five years for **Pain Canada** to coordinate national efforts and resources for people living with pain
- + Over \$650 million over two years (starting in 2024-25) towards trauma-informed, culturally grounded, community-based mental wellness initiatives, including:
 - + Substance use prevention and treatment
 - + Supporting 75 Mental Wellness Teams in 385 First Nations and Inuit communities
 - + **Hope for Wellness Help Line**
- + \$72.1 million through the **Veteran Homelessness Program's Services and Support Stream**, to deliver rent supplements and wrap-around services to Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- + \$500 million for the **Youth Mental Health Fund** to help younger Canadians access the mental health care they need
- + \$20.2 million for the **Youth Substance Use Prevention Program** to support community-based projects in developing tailored approaches to preventing and delaying youth substance use and the establishment of a **Knowledge Development and Exchange Hub for Youth Substance Use Prevention in Canada**. To date, 12 projects are operational
- + **\$17 million** to the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Matters to conduct research and knowledge mobilization activities focused on substance use harms, as well as:
 - + **\$2.85 million** to evaluate the impacts of the decriminalization exemption in B.C.
 - + \$6 million to create a **Network Coordinating Centre** to support knowledge sharing and training and an **Indigenous Engagement Platform** to strengthen Indigenous engagement in research
- + \$10.6 million annually through the **Drug Treatment Court Funding Program** to provinces and territories to develop, deliver and evaluate drug treatment courts. The program currently supports 22 drug treatment courts as well as several other therapeutic justice programs across Canada
- + \$23 million to support the **Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans** research program at McMaster University

Prevention and education

Prevention and education efforts raise awareness and help reduce the use of substances, influencing the health and well-being of people living in Canada. The following initiatives highlight how targeted support is driving real change in communities:

- + The **Youth Substance Use Prevention Program**, based on the internationally recognized Icelandic Prevention Model, supports 11 community-based programs to build youth resiliency and reduce known risk factors for future substance use
- + Public education campaigns to raise awareness of the overdose crisis, with a focus on prevention, reducing stigma, and supporting help-seeking behaviours. Key initiatives include:
 - + **Ease the Burden**, a national campaign aimed at reducing stigma around addiction and encouraging help-seeking among men working in physically demanding jobs. From September 2022 to November 2024, the campaign ads were viewed 284.7 million times
 - + **Know More Opioids youth awareness program**, engaged over 198,200 teens and young adults through more than 1,800 virtual sessions and 1,000 in-person high school sessions between April 2018 and March 2025
- + In 2024, over 2,200 festival organizers received information about naloxone and overdose prevention materials to share with event goers
- + Toolkits have been developed for specific industries, including:
 - + A **toolkit** supporting employers and employees in the trades to help reduce the harms of substance use
 - + A **toolkit for pharmacy professionals** to raise awareness of stigma and promote best practices for pharmacists to support people taking opioids
- + Recognizing that unmanaged pain and the overreliance of prescription opioids for pain are contributing factors to substance use, efforts were undertaken to:
 - + Implement the **Canadian Pain Task Force** recommendations, so that pain is understood, prevented, and effectively treated
 - + Co-organize the **National Pain Congress** with the Canadian Pain Society and Pain Canada, bringing together pain specialists, researchers, people living with pain, and policy makers to discuss pain priorities and mobilize knowledge
 - + Support knowledge sharing amongst stakeholders and developed guidance and resources to improve pain management, including:
 - > National **pediatric pain management standard** to help ensure equitable and quality pain management in hospital settings
 - > **Power Over Pain** portal providing resources and support for health care providers and people living with pain in managing their chronic pain
- + Worked with the **Standards Council of Canada** to develop new tools to improve understanding and coordination among mental health and substance use health care providers
- + Worked with **Physical and Health Education Canada** to create a **resource hub** with tools and e-learning for educators to prevent substance-related harms in schools
- + Supported **Thunderbird Partnership Foundation** and **First Peoples Wellness Circle** to create a National Youth Council to ensure Indigenous youth perspectives shape mental wellness and substance use policies and programs

Evidence

Reliable, timely, and accurate data is essential for shaping effective policies and public health responses. Federal investments support a wide range of initiatives that enhance surveillance, forensic analysis, and knowledge sharing. For example:

- + Enhancing laboratory analysis and reporting on illegal drugs, including:
 - + Creating the **Canadian Drug Analysis Centre** to profile and analyze synthetic drug samples to deliver quality forensic information, supporting law enforcement and public safety agencies
 - + Supporting the **Canadian Drug and Substance Watch** by sharing laboratory confirmatory analysis data on new and emerging psychoactive substances
 - + Providing confirmatory analysis to help community groups strengthen their analytical capacity
- + Deploying Federal Public Health Officers to a range of settings in provinces and territories to advance surveillance efforts, public reporting and data sharing
- + Surveillance activities and reports:
 - + Quarterly pan-Canadian updates on **opioid and stimulant related harms** in collaboration with provincial and territorial public health partners
 - + The **CDSS data and evidence framework**
 - + Data on **supervised consumption sites (SCS)** in Canada, including the number of visits, client demographics, drugs used, overdoses, and referrals to services
 - + **National Wastewater Drug Surveillance** and the **Canadian Wastewater Survey** that screen for the presence of drugs, drug metabolites, and precursor chemicals in Canada's wastewater
- + Public opinion research on:
 - + **Canadians' knowledge and attitudes around drug decriminalization**
 - + **Controlled substances awareness, knowledge, and behaviours for public education**
 - + The **People with Lived and Living Experience Survey** on substance use among street involved youth in Canada
 - + The **2023 Canadian Substance Use Survey** on the use of alcohol and drugs in Canada by those aged 15 and over
 - + The **2023-24 Canadian Student Alcohol and Drugs Survey** on substance use by students in grades 7 to 12 across Canada
 - + The **Online New Psychoactive Substances Survey**
 - + **Statistics Canada's Overdose Crisis Data Program** addresses evidence gaps and enables research into substance use, overdose, and related harms leveraging multiple data sources and data integration opportunities
- + Collaboration and knowledge exchange efforts, including:
 - + Establishing the Chief Coroners, Chief Medical Examiners, and Public Health Collaborative to develop common approaches to death investigations, promoting consistency and guiding prevention strategies
 - + Independent research and knowledge mobilization efforts through Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Matters including: an **evaluation** of the impacts of prescribed alternative pilot projects and assessment on the public health impacts of supervised consumption sites across Canada

Substance use services and supports

Substance use is different for each person, and there is no single service that will meet everyone's needs. To help connect people to treatment, harm reduction and recovery services, federal investments support:

Treatment and Recovery

- + Guidance for health care providers, including:
 - + **Clinical guidelines** and **operational guidance** for injectable OAT
 - + **National treatment guidelines for opioid use disorders**
- + Access to treatment options 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
- + Improving access to Drug Treatment Courts through revised Public Prosecution Service of Canada's **guidelines** to reduce barriers, and offer more flexible criteria for graduation from the program
- + The delivery of treatment services and supports in First Nations Communities, including:
 - + Supporting 45 treatment centres, to enhance services, improving access for those who may not otherwise seek treatment of OAT to provide wraparound services at 83 sites in approximately 100 First Nations and Inuit Communities
 - + Launching Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's **Bundles of Interventions, Resources, and Cultural Hub** to provide access to culturally-based virtual mental wellness and addictions resources
 - + Supporting the **Youth Solvent Abuse Committee** to train and assist Youth and Family Treatment Centers
- + The delivery of treatment services and supports in federal correctional facilities, including:
 - + Revised **opioid use disorder guidelines**
 - + Appointed a national OAT medical advisor and established a national Substance Use Services committee to coordinate policy and service delivery for inmates with substance use related health needs
 - + Ongoing implementation of psycho-social programs including **Self-Management and Recovery Training** across institutions

Harm reduction

- + Support access to **supervised consumption services (SCS)** and overdose monitoring services, by:
 - + Approving 30 SCS as a key pathway to connect people who use drugs with essential services, including counselling, treatment and housing. From January 2017 to February 2025, SCS received over 5.2 million visits, responded to over 64,000 non-fatal overdoses, and made more than 600,000 referrals to health and social services
 - + Inviting provinces and territories to establish temporary urgent public health needs sites where people can consume drugs under supervision, to reduce risk of overdose death
- + Implementing **Overdose Prevention Services** at five correctional institutions
- + Access to and use of naloxone through:
 - + The development of **guidance on take-home naloxone** programs
 - + Support for the **Thunderbird Partnership Foundation** to create and distribute take-home nasal naloxone kits to federally funded treatment centres in First Nations communities
 - + Expanded naloxone availability in correctional institutions by providing direct access to inmates and offering take-home kits to all individuals upon release
 - + Improve access to sterile drug use equipment, including implementing a **prison needle exchange program** in 13 sites in 12 federal correctional institutions
- + Reduce risks and connect people experiencing homelessness and substance use to harm reduction supports under the **Reaching Home program**. Since 2019, \$822 million has supported 2,916 projects helping people with addictions
- + Provide targeted harm reduction supports for Veterans through the **Veteran Homelessness Program**, counselling and substance use services

Substance controls

To disrupt the illegal drug supply and enhance public safety, the federal government is taking actions to control substances:

- + Provided law and border enforcement **additional tools** to combat illegal drug production
- + Published a **Notice of Intent** in the *Canada Gazette, Part I*, to amend the regulations for precursor chemicals and certain drug equipment
- + Investigating and charging criminal actors suspected of manufacturing and/or trafficking illegal substances, including:
 - + Working with private sector partners to **limit the flow of legitimate** chemicals used for manufacturing illegal substances
 - + Investigating and dismantling clandestine drug labs capable of producing large quantities of synthetic drugs
 - + Targeting organized crime groups involved in the illegal production and trafficking of synthetic drugs
- + Worked with private and public sector partners to address **money laundering of the proceeds of fentanyl trafficking**
- + Introduced legislative amendments to the *Criminal Code* in 2023 and 2024 to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of the offence of laundering proceeds of crime and other economic crimes, and to facilitate the seizure and restraint of proceeds of crime for possible forfeiture