

Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX

From: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX
Sent: November 27, 2023 4:00 PM
To: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX; Butler, Ally MMHA:EX
Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX
Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

Thanks Chris,

Marielle Tounsi, MAPC | Communications Manager
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions | Government Communications & Public Engagement
Cell: (778) 584-1255
Pronouns: she, her, hers

I gratefully acknowledge that I live, learn and work on the land of the Lekwungen Peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

From: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 3:58 PM
To: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>; Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

Pieces to remove and add to background noted below (#'S 4&5)

Chris Van Veen
Senior Director, Decriminalization Branch
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
604-928-6552



From: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 3:50 PM
To: Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>; Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

So to clarify, can you confirm which pieces you think we should include in the response and which in background?

Marielle Tounsi, MAPC | Communications Manager
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Cell: (778) 584-1255

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From: Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>

Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 3:48 PM

To: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>; Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>

Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>

Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

That's fine with me.

Best,

Ally Butler (she/her/hers)

Assistant Deputy Minister

Treatment and Recovery Division

Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

1515 Blanshard | Victoria, BC

778.366.5962 | 604.790.5874 (Cell)

From: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>

Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 3:26 PM

To: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>; Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>

Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>

Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

Importance: High

s.13

Marielle Tounsi, MAPC | Communications Manager

Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions | Government Communications & Public Engagement

Cell: (778) 584-1255

Pronouns: she, her, hers

I gratefully acknowledge that I live, learn and work on the land of the Lekwungen Peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

From: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>

Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 3:14 PM

To: Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>; Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>

Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>

Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

Hi Ally,

I've included more details in the answers below for your consideration, but note that some of this is not information that we've communicated broadly—though it responds to the question and demonstrates early positive outcomes.

Best,

Chris Van Veen
Senior Director, Decriminalization Branch
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
604-928-6552



From: Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 1:28 PM
To: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>; Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

I see we didn't answer some of the questions below? My responses are in green.

Chris – some of us to take a second look at.

Best,
Ally Butler (she/her/hers)
Assistant Deputy Minister
Treatment and Recovery Division
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
1515 Blanshard | Victoria, BC
778.366.5962 | 604.790.5874 (Cell)

From: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 12:02 PM
To: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>; Butler, Ally MMHA:EX <Ally.Butler@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

Hi Marielle,

I've included some answers, and comments below. I think we need to reach across to PSSG on some of these.

Ally, I've flagged one question for you about sharing some of the data we presented publicly at the conference last week. Could you have a look?

Best,

Chris Van Veen
Senior Director, Decriminalization Branch
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
604-928-6552



From: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX <Marielle.Tounsi@gov.bc.ca>

Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 11:44 AM

To: Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX <Chris.VanVeen@gov.bc.ca>

Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX <Suhan-Kumar.Alagaratanam@gov.bc.ca>

Subject: FOR INPUT - DUE 1pm - MMHA Media Request - Decrim - information on developing police resources

Importance: High

Hi Chris,

Please see the below media request and recommended response based on previous media requests and our decrim master QA.

s.13

Thanks,

Marielle Tounsi, MAPC | Communications Manager

Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions | Government Communications & Public Engagement

Cell: (778) 584-1255

Pronouns: she, her, hers

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Reporter

Tyson Singh Kelsall, Freelancer

Unknown

tkelsall@live.ca

Deadline ASAP

Request

I am writing a piece for the Georgia Straight on the decriminalization training materials for police developed by the MMHA and launched in December 2022 - acquired via FOI.

I am wondering if you would like to answer the following questions - either by phone or via email statement. My deadline is end of day Monday the 27th.

1. Can you tell us total expenditure from the government of BC, including staffing resources, that went into developing this resource?^{s.13}

s.13

2. The package indicates that this training is 'highly recommended,' can you confirm whether it is mandatory or optional for police forces across the province? s.13

s.13

3. Will there be new training developed re: implementing Bill 34? How much will this change? s.13

s.13

4. Would the MMHA like to say anything about the impact of sub-2.5 grams drug seizures without arrest - for example, does the MMHA take the position that drug seizures cause harm? How so? s.13

s.13

5. Could you expand at all on the role of health authority workers collaborating with police: what are their duties? what is total expenditure of health authority \$ on these positions across the province? s.13

Proposed response: s.13

s.13

6. Can you confirm or deny whether the MMHA has rolled out a separate training altogether to give police officers the tools to use fentanyl test strips? If so, could you expand on that process at all? If not, is it something the MMHA is considering? s.13

s.13

7. Can you clarify why police are not using scales and only 'eye-balling' drug quantities? s.13

If you would prefer a phone call, let me know a time and number for Monday that works.

Background

Information in the response is from previously approved MRs and decrim master qa.

Recommendation

Statement Attributable to Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental health and Addictions

“The toxic drug crisis continues to devastate families and communities across the province. Decriminalization aims to reduce stigma and make it easier for people to reach out for help, so we can better connect them to the care they need. Early data is promising, suggesting that decriminalization is working as intended. It is one of the tools that, together with other actions and investments we are making across the continuum of care, will help us continue to address the toxic drug crisis, connect people to the care they need, and support people through their recovery journey.”

Background info:

s.13

Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX

From: Tounsi, Marielle GCPE:EX
Sent: November 28, 2023 3:29 PM
To: Butler, Ally MMHA:EX; Van Veen, Chris MMHA:EX
Cc: Alagaratanam, Suhan- Kumar MMHA:EX
Subject: FYI - final response on decrim request

Hi all,

Sharing the final info that we will be sending to the reporter on this.

Thank you,

Marielle Tounsi, MAPC | Communications Manager
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions | Government Communications & Public Engagement
Cell: (778) 584-1255
Pronouns: she, her, hers

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Reporter

Tyson Singh Kelsall, Freelancer
Unknown
tkelsall@live.ca

Deadline ASAP

Request

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I am wondering if you would like to answer the following questions - either by phone or via email statement. My deadline is end of day Monday the 27th.

1. Can you tell us total expenditure from the government of BC, including staffing resources, that went into developing this resource?
2. The package indicates that this training is 'highly recommended,' can you confirm whether it is mandatory or optional for police forces across the province?
3. Will there be new training developed re: implementing Bill 34? How much will this change?
4. Would the MMHA like to say anything about the impact of sub-2.5 grams drug seizures without arrest - for example, does the MMHA take the position that drug seizures cause harm? How so?
5. Could you expand at all on the role of health authority workers collaborating with police: what are their duties? what is total expenditure of health authority \$ on these positions across the province?
6. Can you confirm or deny whether the MMHA has rolled out a separate training altogether to give police officers the tools to use fentanyl test strips? If so, could you expand on that process at all? If not, is it something the MMHA is considering?
7. Can you clarify why police are not using scales and only 'eye-balling' drug quantities?

If you would prefer a phone call, let me know a time and number for Monday that works.

Recommendation

Statement Attributable to Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

“The toxic drug crisis continues to devastate families and communities across the province. The decriminalization pilot program aims to reduce stigma and make it easier for people to reach out for help, so we can better connect them to the care they need. Early data is promising, suggesting that decriminalization is working as intended. It is one of the tools that, together with other actions and investments we are making across the continuum of care, will help us continue to address the toxic drug crisis, connect people to the care they need, and support people through their recovery journey.”

Background information:

- In the first six months of decriminalization, there has been a 76% decrease in possession offences compared to the past four-year average during the same period from February to July.
- BC’s s.56 exemption request [\[link\]](#) outlines the range of harms that can result from drug seizures (see page 23). As part of the ongoing research of the decriminalization pilot program, evaluations are being done to determine the degree to which a reduction in seizures has decreased associated harms for people who use drugs.
- Health authorities across the province have all added new positions dedicated to implementing decriminalization on the ground, building connections with local service provider and police. These positions also help connect people who are referred by police to voluntary mental health and addictions supports in their own community.
- The Province is providing Health Authorities \$12.4 million over 4 years to support this work.
- The Ministries of Mental Health and Addictions and Public Safety and Solicitor General worked with police leadership and other stakeholders to develop training to support B.C.’s more than 9,000 front line police officers with the knowledge and tools to implement decriminalization.
- Government provided \$50,000 towards developing training resources.
- The training for police ensures that they understand how decriminalization addresses stigma, their role in the successful implementation of decriminalization, and the importance of a public health approach to substance use.
- The training is not mandatory; however, the Ministry strongly recommends the training for all officers. To date, over 88% of frontline police officers have completed the first phase of decriminalization training.
- The Bill 34 legislation provides a consistent approach to public drug use and enables police to redirect people to more appropriate places if they’re using in places where drug use is not permitted. It makes public drug use laws similar to smoking, alcohol and cannabis use.
- The Province will be working closely with police leadership to ensure that officers get the relevant information about the legislation, and are able to apply it within the context of decriminalization on the ground in communities.
- It is neither practical nor safe to take potentially toxic drugs listed in the exemption out of their packaging in public. As such, officers will be following the guidance provided in the training materials to determine weights of drugs.
- Please find more information on B.C.’s decriminalization efforts in our data snapshot: [PowerPoint Presentation \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)