



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Local Government Compliance and Enforcement Association of BC (LGCEA) Extends Support for New Legislation Prohibiting Drug Consumption in Public Spaces.

The Local Government Compliance and Enforcement Association of BC (LGCEA) firmly stands behind the newly proposed legislation aimed at standardizing locations where drug possession and consumption are prohibited. We recognize the paramount importance of public safety, particularly within our communities, in regards to the use of drugs in public spaces frequented by children and youth. The legislation, which provides police officers with compliance capabilities, represents a significant step toward addressing this issue. However, we believe that it does not go far enough in providing the necessary tools for bylaw officers.

In many local governments and indigenous communities throughout British Columbia, bylaw officers serve as the first responders to issues related to homelessness and drug consumption in public areas, rather than the police. The proposed legislation will still require local governments to pass bylaws that grant their compliance and enforcement officers the legal authority to enforce drug consumption restrictions in public places.

The LGCEA is urging the provincial government to follow the example of other Canadian jurisdictions by creating legislation that permits local governments, indigenous communities and institutions the ability to appoint special constables. These tiered policing models are designed to complement and support police services by redirecting certain types of calls to other law enforcement personnel, thereby enabling police to concentrate on more serious calls for service. Such a tiered policing model is increasingly essential, as bylaw officers have, in recent years, been tasked with addressing social issues and quasi-policing calls for service. Unfortunately, training and legislation have not kept pace with the evolving roles and responsibilities placed on these professionals.

There is a pressing need for appropriate training, personal protective equipment, and legislation to mitigate the risks associated with responding to these calls for service, which currently do not exist in British Columbia. This need was underscored by last year's tragic killing of Burnaby RCMP Constable Shaelyn Yang and, most recently, by a violent attack on a bylaw officer in Grand Forks who was dealing with alcohol consumption in a park.

LGCEA President Steffan Zamzow stated, "A tiered policing model similar to other jurisdictions can enhance community safety and provide superior service and appropriate law enforcement responses. It allows local governments, indigenous communities and institutions to employ special constables that receive standardized training, uniforms, personal protective equipment, and authority. Special Constables are able to enforce select provincial acts, which grants additional enforcement capabilities to local governments, as well as, not requiring local governments to create bylaws to mirror provincial acts in order to provide bylaw officers compliance and enforcement authority. We urge the provincial government to act swiftly to create legislation that reflects the current needs of the public, local governments, indigenous communities and our profession."

The LGCEA remains committed to promoting the safety and well-being of our communities and will continue to advocate for comprehensive legislation and support community safety in BC.

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