



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ADVISORY: Media invited to Commissioner's live discussion on the toxic drug crisis, ft. former Chief Coroner and CEO of CMHA BC – Dec. 10

Vancouver B.C. – This international Human Rights Day, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner is hosting the fourth livestreamed conversation in the [Beyond the Headlines](#) series, which will cover one of the most pressing issues in B.C. today: the toxic drug crisis.

On Dec. 10, Commissioner Kasari Govender will sit down with Lisa Lapointe, B.C.'s former Chief Coroner, and Jonny Morris, CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division, to discuss misinformation about the toxic drug crisis, the marginalization that drug users experience, the effectiveness of community-led responses and what it means to take a human rights-based approach.

Media and public are invited to watch the 90-minute discussion via Zoom or livestreamed on the Commissioner's website beginning at 1:30 p.m. PST. Those who register and join the Zoom webinar will be able to ask questions during the event that may be answered live.

As described in the Commissioner's recent [position statement on the toxic drug crisis](#), unregulated drug toxicity is now the leading cause of death in B.C. for people aged 19 to 59. Anyone can be impacted by toxic drugs, and too many people in B.C. have seen the challenges that exist for their loved ones when seeking care and support.

Both guests for this Beyond the Headlines discussion are leading experts in mental health and substance use in the context of the toxic drug crisis. This discussion aims to deepen audiences' understanding of this public health emergency and gain insight into evidence-based responses to the crisis that centre public health and compassion for those impacted.

WHO: **Kasari Govender**, B.C.'s independent Human Rights Commissioner
Lisa Lapointe, B.C.'s former Chief Coroner
Jonny Morris, CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) BC Division

WHAT: Beyond the headlines: A conversation on the toxic drug crisis

WHEN: Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025
1:30–3 p.m. PST

WHERE: Via a Zoom webinar and streaming live via bchumanrights.ca/beyond-the-headlines

REGISTER: To register for the Zoom webinar, visit: [webinar registration](#)

NOTE: Please note that the Commissioner and guests will only be accepting audience questions from registered webinar participants via the Zoom platform during the Q and A. When registering, please advise us of any accessibility needs or translation requirements you may have. We will work to accommodate you.

Beyond the Headlines resources

- [Beyond the Headlines](#) is a series of conversations with leaders and change makers about key issues facing people in British Columbia. Watch the first three Beyond the Headlines episodes:
 - [Housing and Human Rights](#) with Marie-Josée Houle, Federal Housing Advocate
 - [Migrant Workers' Rights](#) with Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General for Amnesty International Canada's English-Speaking section
 - [Discussing gender identity and expression with young people](#) with Jessica Love, author and illustrator of *Julián is a Mermaid*, and Georgia Franklin, Provincial Coordinator of the BC Summer Reading Club
- The [Rights in Focus](#) report, from which Beyond the Headlines topics are drawn, describes 10 key systems impacting human rights in British Columbia. The toxic drug crisis was highlighted in the Inequities in the Health Care System section.

Toxic drug crisis resources

- [A Human Rights-Based Approach to the Toxic Drug Crisis](#) – The Commissioner's position statement on the toxic drug crisis
- [I Love My Human Rights video ft. Guy Felicella](#) – former substance user Guy Felicella is the subject of the latest video in this series, which uses storytelling as a tool to help personalize complex human rights concepts.

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Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact Lindsey Bertrand, Manager, Communications, at media@bchumanrights.ca or 604-306-7369.

Media kit

[Visit our media kit](#) for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender, pronunciation guidance, bios and more.

About BCOHRC

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: bchumanrights.ca



About the Commissioner

Kasari Govender began her work as B.C.'s first independent human rights commissioner in September 2019. As an independent officer of the Legislature, Commissioner Govender is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level. In her first five-year term, her work through BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner included a public inquiry into experiences of hate in the pandemic, a report on systemic discrimination in policing, community embedded research about a range of human rights issues experienced by British Columbians, public awareness campaigns about ableism and racism and guidance to government that, among other things, informed the creation of both the *Anti-Racism Data Act* and the *Anti-Racism Act*. Commissioner Govender was reappointed for a second term beginning in September 2024.

About Lisa Lapointe

Lisa Lapointe was British Columbia's Chief Coroner from February 2011 until her retirement in February 2024, ensuring the independent and objective investigation of all unnatural and unexpected deaths in the province during her thirteen-year tenure. In 2018, under Lisa's leadership, the Coroners Service was awarded the inaugural Premier's Award for Evidence-Based Design for its analysis and timely reporting of data on illicit drug overdose deaths in the midst of a public health emergency.

Following her retirement, Lisa has continued to advocate for an evidence-informed response to British Columbia's toxic drug public health emergency, in which 18,000 lives have been lost to the unregulated drug supply since 2016. She is regularly invited to speak with community and professional groups both provincially and nationally about the facts and impacts of current drug policy and legislation, and the measures necessary to reduce harms and save lives.

About Jonny Morris

Jonathan (Jonny) Morris, CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA BC), is a visionary leader with over two decades of experience in community mental health care. He has held key roles in advocating for mental health and system transformation in suicide prevention, early intervention, and addictions programs. Jonny's profound commitment to mental health advocacy extends beyond his role at CMHA BC. He is a sought-after speaker, thought leader and an advocate for policy changes at the local, provincial and national level, tirelessly pushing for a more inclusive and empathetic approach to mental health in Canada. Jonny's comes to this work with his own lived and living experience, with a background in research and practice in suicide prevention, combined with his experience as a counselor, professor and facilitator. He played a crucial part in shaping the new Provincial portfolio of Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and currently leads CMHA BC, focusing on advocacy, community-led programs, stigma reduction and leadership education across the province.

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