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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harm reduction advocate uses lived experience to show why we need to move past stigma and support people with addiction and mental health challenges

Vancouver B.C. – B.C.'s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) has released their latest I Love My Human Rights video featuring former drug user Guy Felicella.

After 30 years navigating addiction—including many living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside—Guy describes how he was able to seek recovery and build a different life for himself thanks to access to a range of services and people who care about him. He now advocates for evidence-based solutions to help people struggling with substance use and addiction, emphasizing the importance of connection and belonging for recovery.

"Hearing Guy's story in his own words gives us the opportunity to connect to the human experience behind the staggering statistics we hear each month about the toxic drug crisis," said Commissioner Kasari Govender. "His experience is illustrative of the importance of providing people who are struggling with substance dependence with access to safer supply and harm reduction supports, rather than punishing them for a perceived moral failure. Guy's experience shows what is possible when people can access the resources they need."

"Stigma in our society is just as deadly as the drugs," Guy explained, "it's the main reason why people don't reach out for support, use drugs alone and, sadly, overdose."

"I support helping people, and everyone deserves access to harm reduction, recovery and housing. Human connection can change the direction of people's lives."

This is the seventh installment in BCOHRC's I Love My Human Rights series, which uses video storytelling as a tool to help personalize complex human rights concepts through the stories of advocates, and to encourage empathy and action.

The I Love My Human Rights video series and resources can be found via BCOHRC's website at bchumanrights.ca/love.

Related resources

- [Commissioner's position statement: A human rights-based approach to the toxic drug crisis](#)
- BCOHRC's upcoming [Beyond the Headlines](#) conversation on the toxic drug crisis, taking place on Dec. 10, 2025 - [Register here](#)
- [Rights in Focus report: Spotlight on the toxic drug crisis \(p. 49\)](#)

Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact media@bchumanrights.ca.

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.

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