



Premier Danielle Smith and Mental Health and Addiction Minister Dan Williams announce introduction of compassionate intervention legislation on April 15, 2025.
(Supplied)

UCP introduces Compassionate Intervention Act, NDP and Friends of Medicare say bill is anything but

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The UCP says its proposed *Compassionate Intervention Act* will deliver, and help individuals who are likely to cause harm to themselves or others.

Also known as Bill 53, the act is said to build on the UCP's goals for recovery, and is part of their broader Alberta Recovery Model.

"For those suffering from addiction there are two paths – they can let their addiction destroy and take their life or they can enter recovery. There is no compassion in leaving people to suffer in the throes of addiction and in Alberta we choose recovery," Premier Danielle Smith said Tuesday.

"That's why we're introducing compassionate intervention – another tool in the Alberta Recovery Model – to help keep our communities safe while ensuring our most vulnerable can access much needed recovery supports."

If passed, the act would create a pathway, the province explained, for parents, family, guardians, health care professionals, and law enforcement, to request a treatment order or care plan for those who, because of their severe addiction, are likely to cause harm.

“The introduction of the UCP’s forced treatment legislation today is the culmination of their failed drug policy. It will do nothing to address the public safety issues that our communities are facing. There’s no evidence that forced treatment works, and Albertans are desperate for real solutions,” Janet Eremenko ,the NDP’s shadow minister for mental health and addiction, said in reaction.

“The UCP government has promised 11 recover communities and opened three, leading to average wait times of three months. This model will do nothing to stop homelessness nor will it stop Albertans from starting to use drugs. “

Eremenko added that the UCP’s approach of cutting prevention measures, as well as funding for early intervention, raises serious ethical and legal questions.

Advocacy group Friends of Medicare also responded Tuesday, saying the proposed legislation is, “anything but compassionate.”

“The government is stubbornly moving forward with this ideological bill despite a lack of evidence to support forced treatment. In fact, there is evidence to show this approach could very well result in further harm and more fatalities,” said Chris Gallaway, executive director of Friends of Medicare.

“We regularly hear stories from Albertans who voluntarily seek out mental health or addictions support, but can’t find it or are told they’ll have to wait. The real issue we need to tackle is a lack of access to timely care, not a push to further criminalize those who use drugs.”

Gallaway added that the government is refusing to listen to medical evidence.

Eligibility, the government pointed out, is comparable to the *Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act* (PChAD), which provides mandatory short-term stabilization, detox and assessment.

Per the UCP, compassionate intervention would replace and improve PChAD, allowing for longer-term treatment, an easier application process and increased family involvement in a child’s recovery.

“This is an opportunity to bring forward a world-leading program that will restore health to our most vulnerable Albertans, many of whom are facing the most severe addictions,” said Dr. Rob Tanguay, interim senior medical lead for compassionate intervention, Recovery Alberta.

“I look forward to working with Recovery Alberta and Alberta’s government to help lead a thoughtful and evidence-informed implementation of compassionate intervention.”

Budget 2025 provides \$180 million over three years to build two 150-bed compassionate intervention centres in Edmonton and Calgary, with construction expected to begin in 2026, the province also shared.

For youth capacity, Alberta’s government is planning to transition protective safe houses used for PChAD into spaces for compassionate intervention.

by Josh Hall | @Vancan19