
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Forfeiture changes target deadly crimes, related tools

VICTORIA – B.C.’s civil forfeiture program is responding to disturbing crime trends by going after more tools and information linked to dangerous activities in the drug trade.

“We need to ensure that our civil forfeiture program is working as well as it can, so when police advise us about how drug gangs and organized crime are changing the ways they do business in B.C., we are committed to taking necessary steps to keep pace,” said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. “These latest regulatory changes build on the legislative updates we made in 2019 and will help reduce violent crime and other activities that pose clear risks to public safety.”

In response to police-observed trends of tools being used by organized crime and drug traffickers to further violence and avoid law enforcement, two types of devices are being included in the list of equipment related to trafficking. Vehicles or other property containing these devices may be considered instruments of unlawful activity.

The devices are:

- **Radio jammers:** Criminals use these devices, which are illegal under the federal Radiocommunication Act, to block the ability of police using GPS to monitor them and to block radio communication by authorities.
- **Aftermarket GPS trackers:** Police found that a growing number of traffickers use these devices to track rivals they are targeting with violence or to keep tabs on subordinates, vehicles and high-value contraband items such as guns and drugs.

“Any device that interferes with communication among front-line officers, or that supports gang members in targeting their rivals with violence, has no place in the hands of criminals,” said Fiona Wilson, deputy chief of the investigation division, Vancouver Police Department. “Any additional measures that deter criminal use of these devices is welcome as we and other police agencies work to curb profit-driven violence in the drug trade and by organized crime.”

As well, the Civil Forfeiture Office (CFO) is clarifying the legal definition of “likely to cause serious bodily harm.” This will help ensure greater consistency in the court’s understanding and application of this term. In turn, it will create a clearer path to achieving forfeiture of property used in ways that have posed a significant risk of harm to others.

The CFO is also formalizing its ability to secure specific information from more public bodies, which can strengthen cases against money laundering and gang activity. Public bodies added to the prescribed list in the regulation include the BC Securities Commission, the Motor Dealer Council, the BC Lottery Corporation, BC Hydro and BC Assessment. While the office has existing, individual information-sharing agreements with some of these bodies, prescribing

them in regulation will enhance openness and transparency, and facilitate consistent agreements across multiple agencies.

The regulatory changes to the civil forfeiture program are effective immediately.

Quick Facts:

- The CFO does not conduct investigations and its director may only collect information related to the office's functions and duties.
- Items currently prescribed in law as presumed to indicate unlawful activity include weighing scales and records of drug sales and debts.
- Public bodies from which the CFO can compel key information, as prescribed in regulation, include the BC Financial Services Authority, ICBC and the Ministry of Finance.
- Types of information sought from these organizations may include investigative material and vehicle licensing and registration information.

Learn More:

B.C. Civil Forfeiture Office: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/crime-prevention/civil-forfeiture-office>

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