

0%

[SIGN IN](#) [CREATE ACCOUNT](#)[+ ENGLISH](#)[Video](#) [TV](#) [News](#) [Tech](#) [Rec Room](#) [Food](#) [The 8:46 Project](#)**VICE** News

A Store Selling Heroin, Meth, and Cocaine Just Opened in Canada

Jerry Martin has opened The Drugs Store in Vancouver. If arrested, he plans to launch a constitutional challenge.

By [Manisha Krishnan](#)

May 4, 2023, 1:34am

[Share](#)[Tweet](#)[Snap](#)

PHOTO BY MANISHA KRISHNAN

VANCOUVER- A Vancouver man has opened the only known brick-and-mortar store in Canada and the U.S. that sells heroin, cocaine, meth, MDMA, and other drugs.

Jerry Martin, 51, opened the Drugs Store Wednesday in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a neighborhood that's long been considered ground zero for Canada's overdose epidemic. While British Columbia has very progressive drug laws, the mobile shop is operating completely illegally. The province recently began a three-year drug decriminalization pilot project for possession of small amounts of opioids, cocaine, meth, and MDMA, but selling remains prohibited.

However, Martin told VICE News he opened the store because he wants to give people drugs that have been tested and are free from adulterants, including fentanyl. Although fentanyl, which is driving record overdoses

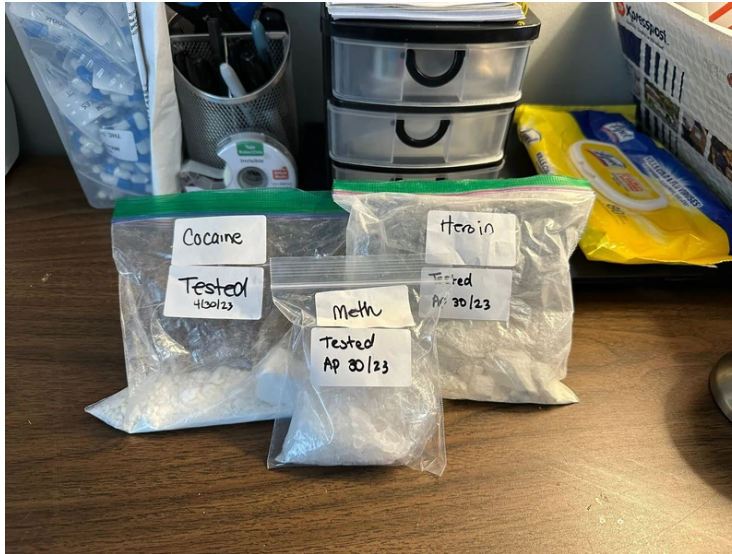
10%

20%

in Canada and the U.S., is the primary street opioid that Vancouverites now use, Martin is instead selling heroin.

"People are dying," Martin said. "Especially now, they've allowed the entire province to do these drugs... But they've provided no clean, safe supply. They're getting it from the same supply that everybody's overdosing from."

More than 11,000 British Columbians have died of a drug overdose since 2016, when the province declared the issue a public health emergency.



Martin said he'd be selling people a max of 2.5 grams of each drug, with serving sizes as small as a point (one-tenth of a gram). Under B.C.'s decriminalization policy, a person can have up to 2.5 grams of the aforementioned substances in total without facing criminal consequences. He's charging roughly street prices, with grams of cocaine and meth going for \$90 and \$50, respectively.

He'll be checking IDs to make sure customers are at least 18 and said he wants them to sign a waiver indicating that they've previously used the drugs they're purchasing.

He's also started an online shop with a delivery service that carries more drugs than he has in store, such as ketamine, LSD, and 5-MeO-DMT, a synthetic version of a chemical that comes from the bufo alvarius toad and is considered one of the most powerful psychedelics on Earth.

Opening the store hasn't been an easy feat for Martin, who struggled to find a location (he originally wanted a non-mobile storefront) and financial backing. He has a criminal conviction for cannabis trafficking and said it's impacted his credit. He's also been bouncing around between hotels and Airbnbs, as some property owners have kicked him out after reading about his plans in [previous news stories](#).

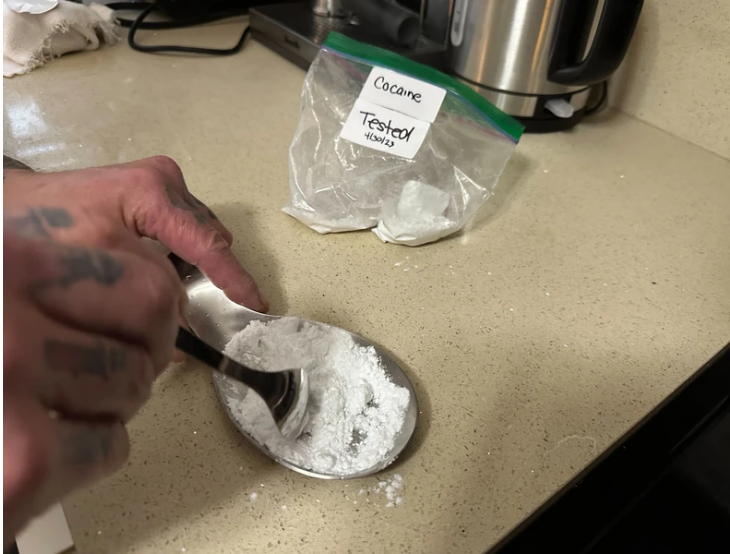
He wore a stab-proof vest as a precaution Wednesday and said he's keeping a minimal amount of drugs on site to reduce the risk of robbery.

Sourcing the different drugs has been a challenge, he said, noting it took him two years to find a heroin supplier. Heroin, once the predominant

50%

illicit opioid in North America, has largely been replaced by fentanyl, which is easier and cheaper to manufacture and smuggle. Martin runs a real risk of being arrested. If that happens, his lawyer Paul Lewin has already prepared arguments to launch a constitutional challenge.

“He would allege that laws that prevent a safe supply and result in death by poisoning contravene section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and must be struck down,” Lewin wrote in a letter to Martin’s potential landlords and business partners.



60%

70%

Under Section 7 of the Charter, which was used to strike down medical cannabis restrictions, Canadians have “the right to life, liberty, and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.”

In Canada, the maximum penalty for selling Schedule I or II drugs is life in prison.

Martin started using drugs at 14 and was addicted to alcohol and injecting cocaine by age 15. He was unhoused for the next 15 years, he said, living in Langley, B.C., Oshawa, Ontario, and other Canadian cities.

He said he was moved to open the store when his stepbrother, Gord Rennie, died of an overdose last year. Rennie, who was addicted to benzo dope—a deadly cocktail of fentanyl and ultra potent benzodiazepines, was featured in the VICE News Tonight documentary Beyond Fentanyl.

A couple months after VICE News interviewed Rennie, he was found dead under a bridge.

Martin said he regrets not letting Rennie stay with him when he got out of his most recent stint in prison.

“My mom said I should invite him over and I didn’t and he died that day,” he said.

He said one of his other brothers was stabbed to death over drugs in 2000.

Benzo Dope and Tranq: The Next Wave of the Overdose C...



Share



Watch on  YouTube

Martin said all the drugs he’s selling have been tested at Get Your Drugs Tested, a Vancouver facility that uses a fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy machine to detect what’s in people’s drugs.

His hope is to open franchises of The Drugs Store around the country, similar to what happened with grey market cannabis dispensaries.

Karen Ward, a Vancouver-based independent drug policy analyst, said the store is an “inevitable result of the government doing nothing” in terms of setting up a widely accessible safe supply of all drugs. While small safe supply programs for opioid users exist, providing people with pharmaceutical grade heroin and fentanyl as an alternative to street

drugs, harm reduction advocates argue they're not widespread enough.

They also don't cover drugs like cocaine and meth.

Ward said the city should give Martin a license to operate legally.



© 2023 VICE MEDIA GROUP

TAGGED: [DRUGS](#), [CANADIAN NEWS](#), [HARM REDUCTION](#), [VANCOUVER](#), [CANADA](#)