



Council Member Motion

For the Meeting of October 3, 2019

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** October 3, 2019
From: Councillor Loveday and Councillor Potts
Subject: Local Government Support for Urgent and Life Saving Resolutions in a Public Health Emergency

Background

Every day, an average of 4 people across British Columbia die from a poisonous drug supply. The Province of BC has been in a state of Public Health Emergency since April 14, 2016. The epidemic of overdose deaths is preventable. The City of Victoria and the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities endorsed two resolutions for consideration at the Union of BC Municipalities which if implemented by the Province of B.C., could start saving lives immediately.

Unfortunately, the resolutions sessions at UBCM were not allotted enough time and the whole section of "Health" related resolutions were not considered. In a Public Health Emergency, it would seem fitting that these resolutions should be a priority for the UBCM to consider. Due to the order in which resolutions were considered, the only resolution related to the overdose crisis that was considered was an anti-harm reduction resolution in the "community safety" section. Having that resolution be the only policy forwarded to the Province of BC from the Union of BC Municipalities related to this Public Health Emergency sends a dangerous message.

The Union of BC Municipalities failure to consider the City of Victoria's resolutions, that were endorsed by the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities, cannot delay advocacy that is potentially life-saving. It is therefore encouraged that Council approve the following motions.

Recommendations:

1. That Council write the Province to express strong support of the following resolutions and request the Province of British Columbia's timely and favourable consideration:

(B171) Safer Drug Supply to Save Lives

Whereas It has been two years since BC declared a public-health emergency due to increased overdoses, yet the death toll for those consuming substances continues to rise due to an unpredictable and highly-toxic drug supply;

And whereas people with opioid use disorder, a chronic relapsing medical condition, are at high risk of overdose- related harms including death and an estimated 42,200 people inject toxic substances in British Columbia, it is not possible for the treatment system to rapidly

increase services fast enough to manage this number of people as “patients” within a medical treatment model given the many challenges in achieving and retaining the people on opioid use disorder treatment, people at risk of overdose in British Columbia do not have access to a safer alternative to the unpredictable, highly-toxic drug supply:

Therefore be it resolved that in an effort to save lives and reduce harm due to an unpredictable and highly-toxic drug supply, and as part of a holistic response to the public-health emergency, including prevention, treatment, and recovery, that the Province of British Columbia work with local communities, Health Authorities across the Province, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, and the Ministry of Health ensure that people at risk of overdose harm have access to safer alternatives.

(B172) Observed Inhalation Sites for Overdose Prevention

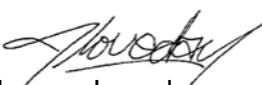
Whereas British Columbia is currently experiencing an unprecedented public health emergency due to an unpredictable and highly-toxic drug supply, and smoking or inhalation is the second most common mode of consumption among all people who have died from a suspected illicit drug overdose and the most common mode of consumption among men and those between the ages of 15 and 29;

And whereas observed consumption services (i.e. supervised consumption services and overdose prevention services) are evidence-based harm reduction approaches shown to reduce overdose-related harm, and there is not adequate access to observed consumption services that provide space for inhalation where communities are facing crisis:

Therefore be it resolved that to ensure that people at risk of overdose across BC have access to observed consumption services that provide space for inhalation, that the Province of British Columbia fund and work through local communities, Health Authorities across the Province, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and the Ministry of Health to provide these services as part of a holistic response to the public-health emergency, including prevention, treatment, and recovery.

2. And That Council write the UBCM executive expressing the City of Victoria’s concern that these urgent and potentially life-saving advocacy resolutions were not considered at the UBCM Convention and requesting the UBCM executive’s timely and favourable consideration of resolutions (B171) and (B172).
3. And That Council write to all UBCM member local governments requesting their endorsement of these resolutions and asking municipalities to write the Provincial Government to share their support.

Respectfully submitted,


Jeremy Loveday


Sarah Potts