



Council Member Motion

For the Committee of the Whole meeting of January 21, 2021

Date: January 17, 2021 **From:** Councillors Alto and Potts
Subject: In Response to the National Overdose Crisis: Regulation, Safe Supply and Decriminalization

Background

The opioid crisis is one of the largest public health emergencies of our lifetime, with a death on average about every two hours and a death toll of over 16,360 since 2016 (January 2016 to March 2020).

Other countries have significantly reduced drug-related fatalities with reforms such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply and decriminalization for personal use.

The Canadian federal government has indicated it is premature to discuss these measures until there are comprehensive supports for people to get well. Supports are needed, but measures that save lives are essential if people are to survive and access supports.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has stated that they agree the evidence suggests decriminalization for simple possession is an effective way to reduce the public health and public safety harms associated with substance use, causing the government to indicate that it is now deliberating over decriminalization.

The overdose crisis rages, showing few signs of abating.

The City of Victoria has expressed its support for drug policy reform through its support for community organizations like Moms Stop the Harm, the SOLID Outreach Society, and Peers Victoria Resources Society, its collaboration with Island Health on harm reduction service and program reform and delivery, and through advocacy Motions as far back as 2010.

Some District of Saanich Councillors are now contemplating a Motion advocating similar calls for decriminalization.

Resolution

Resolved that the Mayor, on behalf of the City of Victoria, writes to the federal Minister of Health calling on the Government of Canada to declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency;

Be it also resolved that in that letter the Mayor calls on the Government of Canada to immediately seek input from the people most affected by this crisis and meet with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive, pan-Canadian overdose action plan, which includes

comprehensive supports and full consideration of reforms that other countries have used to significantly reduce drug-related fatalities and stigma, such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs, and decriminalization for personal use.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alto', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Alto

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Potts', with a large, stylized 'S' shape.

Councillor Potts