



November 4, 2021

1210334

Via email: [mayor@victoria.ca](mailto:mayor@victoria.ca)

Their Worship Lisa Helps  
Mayor, City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps:

Thank you for your letter of October 4, 2021, requesting our ministry's assistance in supporting Island Health to establish permanent inhalation overdose prevention services in Victoria.

I appreciate your strong leadership in advocating for harm reduction and other treatment and recovery supports for those affected by the toxic drug supply. I am particularly grateful to the City of Victoria for authorizing use of the city-owned parking lot located at 930 Pandora Avenue to provide a temporary inhalation overdose prevention site.

While I am focused everyday on building up our system of mental health and addictions care, I know more must be done to expand the continuum of care for people who use drugs.

Since 2017, our government has accelerated its response to the drug poisoning crisis by investing a total of \$938 million to expand existing services and add new resources across the full spectrum of substance use care. Budget 2021 provides a historic investment of \$500 million for mental health and substance use over the next three years. This includes \$45 million to ensure the stability of overdose prevention services including inhalation sites, supporting integrated interdisciplinary outreach teams, and increasing nursing care.

The BC Coroners Service evidence shows that inhalation was the most common route of consumption in illicit toxicity deaths between 2017 and 2019. Ensuring British Columbians have access to observed inhalation services is a priority in BC's accelerated response to the ongoing drug poisoning crisis.

Our government has funded the regional health authorities to increase the number of overdose prevention and supervised consumption services, from one public site in 2016 to 38 today; this includes 13 sites offering inhalation services, with plans for additional sites. In the first seven months of 2021, more than 2,200 overdoses were survived at these sites with zero deaths recorded.

...2

I am committed to supporting Island Health establish a permanent inhalation overdose prevention site in Victoria, recognizing that establishing such services are often a complex collaboration between local government, service providers, landowners/landlords, and other public agencies.

Senior staff members at the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions are in regular contact with Island Health to provide support and assistance through every step of this process and to ensure Island Health is supported to provide access to services across the full continuum of care, including prevention, harm reduction, safe prescription medications, treatment, and recovery.

The City of Victoria continues to be a strong ally in providing evidence-based health services for people who use drugs. I look forward to your continued collaboration and partnership to help stem the tide of the drug poisoning crisis.

Best wishes,

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

Sheila Malcolmson  
Minister

pc: Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health  
Honourable David Eby, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing  
Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation  
Grace Lore, MLA, Victoria-Beacon Hill