



July 20, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

RE: Decriminalization of People Who Use Drugs

British Columbians continue to experience unprecedented rates of overdose-related harms including death due to an unregulated and increasingly toxic street drug supply. Overdose continues to be the leading cause of unnatural death in British Columbia and life expectancy at birth is declining in the province largely due to the public health emergency.

Behind these statistics lies a very personal tragedy. We are losing our family members and our friends. Our neighbours and our colleagues. We must do more.

One of the essential strategies for a supportive environment to prevent overdose-related harm involves addressing stigma, discrimination, and human rights. Criminal prohibitions are ineffective in deterring drug use, and criminalization of drug possession directly leads to both individual and systemic stigma and discrimination that prevent people from seeking services.

By making the necessary changes to section 4(1) of the *Controlled Drugs and Substance Act* to decriminalize possession of illegal drugs for personal use, the federal government would take an enormous step to reduce the systemic stigma associated with illicit drug use and support people to access the services that they need to stay safe and to start on their path to recovery.

As stated publicly, I support the call from The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to decriminalize small amounts of controlled substances in order to battle substance abuse and addiction.

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Therefore, I am writing to urge you to develop a national plan to decriminalize the possession of controlled substances for personal use.

My ministers of Mental Health and Addictions, Public Safety and Solicitor General and Attorney General will be reaching out to their counterparts in your government to discuss this matter directly.

The province of British Columbia offers its support and encouragement to the government of Canada to take urgent, necessary action on this matter to save lives.

Sincerely,



John Horgan
Premier

cc: Honourable Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Honorable David Eby, Attorney General
Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer
Lisa Lapointe, Chief Coroner