



MEDIA RELEASE

PROVINCE RESPONDS TO DR HENRY RECOMMENDATIONS WITH WORDS NOT ACTION

Addictions and mental illness sufferers need more care not more promises

Vancouver, B.C. (July 17, 2024): The B.C. government rejected Dr. Bonnie Henry’s call for expanded access to replacements for hard street drugs. Mental Health and Addictions Minister Whiteside stated that the preferred solution to the ongoing drug induced crisis was instead more care and treatment options for the up to 225,000 British Columbians who access the illicit and deadly drug supply.

While the Save Our Streets (SOS) coalition finds some encouragement from Minister Whiteside’s words, they sadly do not align with reality.

“Our end-goal should not be to provide greater access to a safer supply of hard drugs but rather to decrease the number of British Columbians using those drugs in the first place,” says Jess Ketchum, co-founder, SOS. “Our primary goal should first be to reduce the number of people using hard drugs and that means robust prevention programming. Secondly, we need to provide a comprehensive continuum of care for those people unfortunate enough to be living with these health issues, so they can return to their families and communities with purpose in their lives. Sadly, that is a goal this provincial government is better at talking about than delivering.”

SOS believes that the discussion over the value of harm reduction programs, including safer supply, would change dramatically and be less of a debate if it were linked to immediate access to treatment and recovery available for people when and where they need it.

“The belief should be that these programs are steps to providing greater opportunity to return to health rather than perpetuating an addiction,” stated Ketchum. “That will only happen with province-wide and immediate access to treatment and recovery.”

“Certainly not all but much of the crime and violence we are seeing in our communities is a result of sick people attempting to support their addictions, and the criminal element preying on them. With B.C. losing seven people a day, tens of thousands of lives being destroyed, deteriorating communities and decreasing public safety, what are we waiting for? Yes, the cost of implementing the care these British Columbians need is significant, but the costs of government inaction are infinitely greater. The time to act is now.”

Save Our Streets is a coalition of 100 community and business organizations representing every region of B.C., which is committed to seeing governments bring order and public safety back to communities across British Columbia. Concerned citizen groups, and BC businesses interested in joining or supporting SOS are invited to apply online at SaveOurStreets.ca or contact: info@saveourstreets.ca.

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