



SOS AND MUNICIPAL LEADERS CALLING FOR FIVE PRIORITY ACTIONS FROM PROVINCE

SOS and mayors and councillors at UBCM seek provincial 'Contract with Communities'

VICTORIA, B.C. (Sept. 17, 2026) – Following a recent province-wide SOS survey that shows continued widespread public dissatisfaction with provincial inaction on crime, public safety, addiction and mental illness and the justice system, community leaders at UBCM joined Save Our Streets (SOS) today to sign a large "Contract with our communities" billboard calling on the provincial government to carry out five critical actions that can make a measurable difference.

The critical actions address homeless encampments, the need for increased access to detoxification beds, properly locating public-facing, low-barrier services, prioritizing addictions and mental health services, and fully funding the justice system. Among the speakers at today's event were SOS Co-Founders Jess Ketchum and Clint Mahlman, Mayor Ken Sim of Vancouver, Mayor Marianne Alto of Victoria, Mayor Brad West of Port Coquitlam, Mayor Simon Yu of Prince George and Squamish Councillor Jenna Stoner, the incoming UBCM President.

"Our recent poll and the dozens of mayors and councillors who joined us today demonstrate that these are not partisan issues," said Jess Ketchum. "These issues affect every B.C. community and impact every British Columbian. Unfortunately, long-term progress on these issues will only be made when senior levels of government respond to these challenges as a much higher priority."

The Contract with Communities five critical actions include:

1. Ensure Safe Public Spaces

Commitment: Enact provincial policy that clearly stipulates homeless encampments cannot become established in communities where there are adequate shelter options. In other words, one may choose not to access a shelter bed, but they cannot choose to then set up a tent on public land or in front of a store. **Why this matters:** Public spaces belong to everyone. Residents, visitors, workers, families, seniors, and vulnerable individuals should be able to safely access and enjoy community spaces without fear, obstruction or persistent disorder.

2. Immediately Move Beyond Harm Reduction

Commitment: Immediately make detoxification beds available within Health Ministry facilities in all B.C. communities. **Why this matters:** The almost singular focus on harm reduction services has left vulnerable and ailing people on our streets in communities across the province. Immediately providing detox services at least starts a process of offering people struggling with addictions a second option straightaway.

3. Properly Locate Public-Facing, Low-Barrier Services

Commitment: Harm reduction services for individuals must not operate such that harm is transferred to the neighborhood where the services operate. All provincially-funded harm reduction services and low-barrier housing must have publicly posted standards for how they will ensure no negative impact to surrounding neighborhoods and be held to account or closed.

Why this matters: Neighbourhoods deserve to have businesses and social services that make being a good neighbour a priority. The provision of services should not disrupt the safety or functionality of a neighbourhood simply because of the type of service they provide.

4. Addictions and Mental Health Services Must Be a 2026 Priority

Commitment: Establish government-operated addiction and mental illness treatment and recovery available on a regional basis throughout B.C. now. The provincial government declared the drug and mental health issues a crisis in 2016; it is time they acted like it was a crisis. These services should be established in temporary locations with health staff seconded from other jurisdictions to start treating those in need. **Why this matters:** Communities can no longer wait for the perfect facilities to be built; people suffering on our streets cannot wait for the flawless building. If it is a crisis, government must respond with immediacy and not let perfect solutions stand in the way of immediate action.

5. Justice Services Must Be Funded to Serve the Public Good

Commitment: Fully fund the provincial justice system to hold people accountable for criminal acts. Ensure we have enough judges, sheriffs, crown prosecutors and correctional staff. **Why this matters:** There is a growing sense that the lack of consequences for criminal acts has led to a sense of lawlessness in many B.C. communities. An immense increase in theft, vandalism, and open drug use has made many main streets and downtowns feel unsafe. Further, many businesses feel they have been left to fend for themselves, and the 'system' is not there to support them.

"This 'contract' is a powerful reminder of the common-sense actions community leaders from across B.C. are calling for," said Clint Mahlman, Co-Founder. "It's time for our provincial government to put partisan politics and ideology aside and listen to the residents and elected municipal officials that know their communities best. It's also time to stop relying on decades old solutions that clearly do not work and continue to erode the quality of life of all British Columbians."

About Save Our Streets

Save Our Streets is a coalition of 120-plus community and business organizations representing every corner of British Columbia. SOS members are committed to seeing governments bring order and public safety back to communities across British Columbia. Concerned citizen groups, and B.C. businesses interested in joining or supporting SOS are invited to submit online at SaveOurStreets.ca or contact info@saveourstreets.ca.

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