



Sonia Furstenau, MLA  
Leader of the Third Party  
Room 101, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C.  
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**May 14, 2021**

Dear Ms. Furstenau  
Premier Horgan

Thank you for reaching out with regards to the tragic epidemic of overdoses that our province continues to face since it was declared a public health emergency in 2016.

Last year, 1,724 people died of overdoses in British Columbia, and I agree wholeheartedly that more must be done immediately to help prevent further death and heartbreak. This crisis and the sense of urgency that accompanies it, requires quick action from government as well as the efforts of all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Fortunately, a mechanism exists through which we can do this work, and that is the Select Standing Committee on Health which would allow for open and transparent work in full view of the public. Beyond merely working together it is, in my view, important for the public to see us working together.

Specifically, I am hopeful you will join me in calling on the Premier to activate the Select Standing Committee on Health. I further believe that the Committee's mandate should include work on the following tasks:

1. Immediate actions that can be taken to respond to the ongoing overdose crisis.
2. Immediate and long-term actions with respect to connecting people to treatment and recovery to save lives.
3. Measures that should be taken to modernize the *Mental Health Act*.

I think that you will agree that this will be an effective way to accomplish what you have suggested. Of course, to the extent that you may have views on finalizing the terms of reference, we would be prepared to work with you and the government to finalize the terms of reference.

Despite the government's past reluctance to engage in a truly multi-partisan effort, I remain hopeful that the magnitude of this crisis will prompt the Premier to consider this step. Now, more than ever, this is a time to work together as elected representatives of all British Columbians and make sure this is done right.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

We all agree the deaths must stop and I am hopeful you will see merit in this proposal for a positive step forward.

Sincerely,

Shirley Bond  
Interim Leader of the Official Opposition  
MLA, Prince George-Valemount

CC: Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health  
Honourable Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
Honourable Nicholas Simons, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Trevor Halford, MLA for Surrey-White Rock and Critic for Mental Health & Addictions  
Renee Merrifield, MLA for Kelowna-Mission and Critic for Health  
Adam Olson, MLA for Saanich North and the Islands