

# COUNCIL MEMBER REPORT



DATE: January 18, 2022  
TO: Mayor and Councillors  
FROM: Councillor Ketler  
SUBJECT: Request letter of support for Private Members Bill C-216

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Canada has had successive drug strategies in place since 1987 that have focused on prevention, treatment, enforcement and, at times, harm reduction. In 2006, under the National Anti-Drug Strategy (NADS), the harm reduction pillar was removed. This had devastating consequences for communities and families.

In 2016, after calls for the reinstatement from citizens and health policy groups alike, the Federal government replaced the National Anti-drug Strategy with the Canadian Drug and Substances Strategy (CDSS). The CDSS restored harm reduction as a key pillar of Canada's drug strategy but, as evidence by the worsening substance use crisis, further measures are needed to protect the lives of Canadians.

Our focus needs to shift from treating substance use as a criminal justice issue, to a public health issue. Dr. Patrick Smith, national CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association explains, "Criminalizing people who use drugs stigmatizes substance use, fosters a climate in which they feel unsafe in accessing life-saving interventions and treatment, and further marginalizes those living in poverty or at social disadvantage".

The response to the escalating crisis has been a patchwork of measures across the country. In 2016, BC's Provincial Health Officer declared a public health emergency under the Public Health Act. In Alberta, the Health Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission was created in May of 2017 under the Opioid Emergency Response Regulation. And more recently, the Health Minister of the Yukon Territory said that they would be declaring a Substance Use Emergency under their Public Health and Safety Act.

In 2021, both the City of Vancouver and the City of Toronto made a request to Health Canada for an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) under the provision of section 56(1) which would mean that people found in possession of controlled substances under a certain threshold amount, within municipal boundaries, would not be subject to criminal sanctions.

Although there is no one size fits all response to the crisis and local knowledge of individuals and families affected by substance use must be included in consultations and decisions related

to different strategies, there is general agreement that Federal aid on decriminalization, safe supply and access to recovery, treatment and harm reduction services is needed.

That is what is proposed in MP Gord Johns Private Members Bill C-216 An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to enact the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act and the National Strategy on Substance Use Act. Under Bill C-216 the National Strategy proposes to:

- (a) address the harm associated with the criminalization of substance use;
- (b) ensure that interventions are founded on evidence-based best practices and address the root causes of problematic substance use;
- (c) ensure low-barrier access to a safe supply of medically regulated substances;
- (d) provide universal access to recovery, treatment and harm reduction services for problematic substance use and substance use disorder, including overdose prevention services, relapse prevention services and supervised consumption sites and services;
- (e) implement evidence-based prevention programs that address social and economic factors that contribute to problematic substance use; and
- (f) reduce the stigma associated with substance use, including through outreach and public awareness programs.

<https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-216/first-reading>

I request that the Village of Cumberland write a letter to Minister of Health and Addictions, Carolyn Bennett and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau supporting Private Members Bill C-216 and encourage other local governments to do the same.

# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



January 28, 2022

File No. 0400-60

Dear UBCM Member Municipalities,

I am reaching out to local governments in British Columbia to urge your support for Private Members Bill C-216, Health-Based Approach to the Substance Use Act, which has received first reading in the House of Commons.

The proposed Act would amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and enact the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act and the National Strategy on Substance Use Act. Under Bill C-216, the National Strategy proposes to:

- (a) address the harm associated with the criminalization of substance use;
- (b) ensure that interventions are founded on evidence-based best practices and address the root causes of problematic substance use;
- (c) ensure low-barrier access to a safe supply of medically regulated substances;
- (d) provide universal access to recovery, treatment and harm reduction services for problematic substance use and substance use disorder, including overdose prevention services, relapse prevention services and supervised consumption sites and services;
- (e) implement evidence-based prevention programs that address social and economic factors that contribute to problematic substance use; and
- (f) reduce the stigma associated with substance use, including through outreach and public awareness programs.

Cumberland Council has expressed its support for Bill C-216 to Prime Minister Trudeau and to the Minister of Health and Addictions Carolyn Bennett and I would encourage your Council or Board to do the same in an effort to finally secure Federal aid on decriminalization, safe supply and access to recovery, treatment and harm reduction services.

Yours sincerely,

Leslie Baird  
Mayor

# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



January 28, 2022

File No. 0400-40

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health and Addictions  
Carolyn.Bennett@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister,

I am very pleased to be able to write to you in support of the Private Members Bill C-216, Health-based Approach to the Substance Use Act, which received first reading on December 15, 2021 and which is sponsored by Gord Johns, Member of Parliament for Courtenay-Alberni.

The Council of the Village of Cumberland endorses the National Strategy to address the harm associated with the criminalization of substance use and to ensure that interventions are founded on evidence-based best practices to address the root causes of problematic substance use.

In 2016, harm reduction was restored as a key pillar of Canada's drug strategy with the establishment of the Canadian Drug and Substances Strategy, however further measures are needed to protect the lives of Canadians. I trust that you will support Bill C-216 in order to provide federal aid on decriminalization, safe supply and access to recovery, treatment and harm reductions services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Baird".

Leslie Baird  
Mayor

# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



January 28, 2022

File No. 0400-40

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister,

I am very pleased to be able to write to you in support of the Private Members Bill C-216, Health-based Approach to the Substance Use Act, which received first reading on December 15, 2021 and which is sponsored by Gord Johns, Member of Parliament for Courtenay-Alberni.

The Council of the Village of Cumberland endorses the National Strategy to address the harm associated with the criminalization of substance use and to ensure that interventions are founded on evidence-based best practices to address the root causes of problematic substance use.

In 2016, harm reduction was restored as a key pillar of Canada's drug strategy with the establishment of the Canadian Drug and Substances Strategy, however further measures are needed to protect the lives of Canadians. I trust that you will support Bill C-216 in order to provide federal aid on decriminalization, safe supply and access to recovery, treatment and harm reductions services.

Yours sincerely,

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Leslie Baird  
Mayor