

June 27, 2019

Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer  
Office of the Provincial Health Officer  
Ministry of Health

*Sent via email: [Bonnie.Henry@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Bonnie.Henry@gov.bc.ca)*

**Re: Special Report *Stopping the Harm: Decriminalization of People Who Use Drugs in BC***

Dear Dr. Henry:

We write on behalf of the just over 40 members of the Pacific AIDS Network, to congratulate you for your Special Report *Stopping the Harm: Decriminalization of People Who use Drugs in BC*.

This is a very important report that highlights the critical need for amendments to the BC Police Act and to refocus policing efforts on harm reduction rather than criminalization.

It has been over three years since your colleague Dr. Kendall declared a public health emergency of overdose and overdose deaths. But still, today, nearly 100 people die per month across this province of fatal overdose – BC has the highest rate of fatal overdoses in Canada. This is entirely unacceptable.

These harms and deaths continue despite significant investments by the province and the concerted best efforts of public health, first responders, community-based organizations and peers on the front lines. Your report correctly identifies the ongoing criminalization of people who use drugs as a key contributing factor (along with a toxic and deadly drug supply).

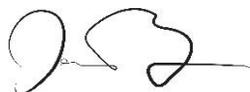
Many PAN member organizations are on the front lines of the overdose crisis, providing essential harm reduction services and programs across BC. We applaud your report for reflecting an appropriate sense of urgency in the call for the province to move to decriminalize people who possess controlled substances for personal use. We also agree with your report's assertion that all of us involved in the provincial response need to act with compassion and uphold basic human rights. Finally, we are pleased to see the series of comprehensive recommendations and the evidence-based solutions being proposed, and are happy to discuss how PAN can best support these efforts.

Thank you, Dr. Henry and colleagues, for this report. Know that you have much support across civil society including among the Pacific AIDS Network and its members.

Sincerely,



**Katrina Jensen**  
Co-Chair



**Jesse Brown**  
Co-Chair



**J. Evin Jones**  
Executive Director

CC. Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia  
Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Honourable Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health