



British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association

November 30, 2021

**Laurie French**

*President*

Canadian School Boards Association

91 Sherwood Drive

Wolfville N.S. B4P2K5

Dear President French,

**Subject: Declaration of National Opiate Death Crisis**

At the October 23, 2021, meeting of the British Columbia School Trustees Association's Provincial Council, representing all 60 boards of education in our province, our members passed the following motion:

*"That BCSTA request that the Canadian School Board Association urge the Government of Canada to:*

- 1. a) declare the toxic drug supply crisis a national public health emergency,*
- 2. b) immediately seek input from the people most affected by this crisis and meet with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive, Pan-Canadian overdose action plan,*  
*and advocate for expanded provincial, cross-ministry supports for our students around substance abuse."*

While often overshadowed by the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the toxic drug supply crisis remains a significant public health concern. Conversations on substance use education, prevention and intervention are common concerns for students, families and staff in our province's schools.

In B.C., deaths associated with the crisis have surpassed previous levels, a statistic that sadly includes school-aged children within it. Reports have also indicated that just over five overdose deaths occurred daily in B.C. earlier this year. The impacts run deep within our communities, and we continue to witness the situation worsen daily. Students, families, communities and schools are deeply affected by these concerns, and it is paramount that steps be taken in response to a problem that is mirrored across the county.

It is crucial that we begin taking the steps needed to address this growing issue, with the first being that the federal government declare the toxic drug supply crisis a national public health emergency. It is also paramount that input from the people most affected by this crisis is considered. Meeting with all our nation's provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive national overdose action plan must be viewed as an essential step on the path forward.



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As part of this initial step, we call on you to open communication channels with the federal government on this issue to begin building cross-ministry and cross-government networks. These collaborative arrangements must be focused on reducing barriers and sharing resources. Cooperation at the local, provincial and federal levels is a critical component of responding to what has become a national matter.

Thank you for supporting the needs of boards of education across Canada in their work of promoting student success. Protecting the wellbeing of our students is a focal point for boards of education, and we look forward to being a part of the solution to this problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Higginson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

**Stephanie Higginson**

*President*

British Columbia School Trustees Association

Motion: P120219.2

CC: Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health (Canada)  
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA  
BCSTA member boards of education