



## News release

Jan. 14, 2025

### Expert panel on opioid crisis Jan. 29 in Victoria

B.C. is eight years into a state of emergency with an unprecedented public health crisis killing between 150 and 200 British Columbians every single month.

Two decades ago, that number of deaths as an annual total was enough to spark urgent calls to action from public health officials about the emerging opioid crisis. Now, the same number of deaths occur month after month - shattering families, devastating friends and work colleagues.

How did we get here? How are we responding, and what more needs to be done? Join us **Wednesday, Jan. 29** for an afternoon dialogue with some of B.C.'s leading experts on the toxic drug crisis.

Peers Victoria is hosting a three-event speaker series in January, February and March - "Out of Harm's Way: Insight, Innovation and Action to End the Toxic Drug Crisis" - exploring the ongoing crisis of opioid poisoning caused by unregulated drugs. The opening event on Jan. 29 features a not-to-be-missed dialogue between these insightful and experienced knowledge leaders:

- Lisa Lapointe, recently retired BC Chief Coroner
- Leslie McBain, family survivor and co-founder of Moms Stop the Harm
- Guy Felicella, activist and advocate, person with lived experience
- DJ Larkin, executive director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
- Dr. Perry Kendall, former B.C. Provincial Health Officer
- First Nations Health Authority, Department of Toxic Drug Response

The day will also include a presentation from the University of Victoria's drug-checking research project monitoring the makeup of the toxic and variable mix of synthetics that now dominate B.C.'s unregulated opiate drug supply.

Accidental opioid poisoning kills people at an average age of 44. The ongoing deaths and lost productivity – estimated in the billions for B.C. and Canada – can be measured, but the toll of such widespread and unimaginable grief and loss is harder to calculate. Please join Peers Victoria for a speaker series designed to illuminate, educate and spur action on an intolerable situation.

- **When: Wednesday, Jan. 29, 1-4 p.m.**
- **Where: First Metropolitan church sanctuary, 943 Balmoral Road (entrance on Quadra St)**
- **Admission: Free**

Watch for more details coming on other events in the series, all at First Metropolitan church in Victoria. The speaker series provides an exceptional opportunity to learn about the realities of the opioid crisis from a public health perspective, all of it presented by a diverse array of people who are directly affected, whether as opioid users, service providers, or policy makers.

**Wednesday, Feb. 26, 3-6 p.m.** Spotlight on existing services, highlighting bright spots, barriers and evidence-based approaches for tackling the complex crisis.

**Wednesday, March 26, 2-5 p.m.** Spotlight on lived experience in recovery whether through abstinence, drug substitution or safer drug-use practices; and bright spots, barriers and accessibility in treatment approaches.

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For more information and to set up interviews with presenters:

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