

**August 31, 2022**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmC7XELVcpo>

**DULF Compassion Club Celebrates First Month of Operations by Giving Away 30 Grams of Community Regulated Supply to Drug User Groups Across the Province, Despite Sect 56 Exemption Rejection**

*DULF Requests Judicial Review of Health Canada's Decision and Forges Ahead with Life Saving Model Despite Lack of Federal Sanctioning*

**British Columbia** – More than 10,000 people have died since BC's Illicit Drug Toxicity Emergency was declared over six years ago, and the ongoing horror and devastation of mass overdose death has continued in our communities unabated. To combat this ever increasing number of deaths, the Drug User Liberation Front (DULF) and Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) submitted a Section 56 Exemption Request to the federal government, one year ago, in order to operate a Cocaine, Heroin, and Methamphetamine Compassion Club and Fulfillment Centre (CHM-CC&FC). This model is informed by the deep connections between DULF and VANDU and people who use drugs in Vancouver's DTES and across the province, and our intervention was tailored to community need, hemmed in by the smattering of resources that we have access to.

On July 29, 2022, Health Canada rejected DULF and VANDU's request for a temporary exemption. This decision was made in spite of the fact that our CHM-CC&FC model remains the only presently operating and scalable framework for illicit drug regulation capable of confronting the scale and severity of BC's Public Health Crisis. The only other analogous low-barrier model, an Opioid Co-Operative Model, put forth by the BCCSU and others, is still in development and not slated to be deployed as an intervention until at least Mid-2023. The rejection of DULF's requisition is further evidence that the Canadian state has no intention of a rapid response to the ongoing crisis and has failed people who use drugs.

Believing that swift community regulation is a necessary step forward in solving the ongoing Health Crisis, we have been left to create a do-it-ourselves model for regulating the currently deregulated market. We must do so because the deregulated market has spiraled into catastrophic territory. To this end, the DULF has chosen to run our CHM-CC&FC model of community drug supply regulation without the sanction of Health Canada. We have also submitted a Notice of Application for a Judicial Review of Health Canada's rejection dated August 26, 2022, with the intention of seeking revaluation of our proposal for a temporary exemption with full consideration of drug users' Section 7 and 15 Charter Rights.

Despite the aforementioned bureaucratic stagnation, the CHM-CC&FC model put forward by the DULF and VANDU is celebrating its first month in operation at the scale of an evaluative pilot and has provided 201 grams of substances without overdose. Ultimately, this framework could already have been expanded across the province with Health Canada's allowance and cooperation. Nevertheless, against a lack of political will for change, DULF and VANDU continue our struggle for an end to the relentless deaths caused by poor public policy that we must endure.

In the words of DULF co-founder, Eris Nyx:

*"Despite Health Canada's total obstinacy and ignorance of tremendous death and human suffering, we have forged ahead with our model in hopes of providing the roadmap for drug user*

*driven market regulation. As it stands right now, this is our only option in saving lives, primarily due to the continuation of prohibition, and lack of substantive response from the Federal Government to the failure of this regime. Despite the lack of engagement from, and tokenization and stigmatization by, federal actors throughout our model's development, we have chosen to persevere resolutely and against the law. We know that our model keeps those we love safe, despite the tremendous risk involved. Ultimately, all battles carry a tremendous risk, and there is a war being fought in the neighbourhood I call home. This war, tantamount to genocide, does not have bullets, and is instead waged through public policy. Its casualties are those that I care for the most, and our situation should be seen as a harbinger of what is to come for others. Our response in this war is a response of love, and our weapons are our freedom to act, our sympathy and care. James Baldwin once said "the price of love [...] is the price of life. Yes. People don't seem to realize that. Love has never been a popular movement, and no-one's ever wanted really to be free. The world is held together, really it is, held together, by the love and the passion of a very few people. [...] I'm aware, you know, that I and the people I love may perish in the morning. I know that. But there's light on our faces now."*

Today, on August 31st, 2022, to celebrate the success of the first month of DULF's Evaluative Compassion Club, and to commemorate the thousands of lives lost, the DULF distributed 30 grams of tested and community regulated cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine to Drug User Groups across the province, including:

- BC Association of People on Opiate Maintenance
- Bridging the Gap
- Coalition of Peers Dismantling the Drug War
- Coalition of Substance Users of the North
- East Kootenay Network of People who Use Drugs
- Fort St John Northern Sun Helpers
- Kootenay Insurrection for Safe Supply
- Maple Ridge Street Outreach Society
- Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
- Nanaimo Area Network of Drug Users
- SOLID Outreach
- Tenant Overdose Response Organizers
- Uniting Northern Drug Users
- Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
- Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society

As a community coalition intent on seeing an end to the outgoing public health crisis, we have put together the following list of demands, calling on every leader in British Columbia and Canada to listen to people who use drugs, without stigmatization and tokenization; to live up to their responsibility; and to openly accept our criticisms and anger without vindictiveness or resentment. These demands are as follows:

1. **Fund the core operating costs of all drug user groups across the province and assist them in securing space and overdose prevention site designation under Section 52 (2) of the Public Health Act S.B.C. 2008, Chapter 28, AND in keeping with Ministerial Order M488 under section 5.2 of the Emergency Health Services Act.**

2. **Immediately sanction and fund illicit market CHM Compassion Clubs in all communities of need until such a time that a viable licit option of market regulation can be scaled out.**
3. **Work alongside drug users on, and listen to our voices, in regards to changes that must be immediately made to public policy including, but not limited to, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA), the Food and Drugs Act, Health Canada Policy POL-0051, etc.**

It is unfortunate that we have been left to struggle as a dim candle in the dark against a terrible howling and shrieking wind of death, but we shall not waver in our convictions. The life, liberty, and security of people who use drugs are at stake, both in terms of the government's inaction to save lives, and decisions like the one made that has denied people who use drugs the ability to protect their own health and safety in the face of overlapping health crises.

Although we wish for the ongoing slaughter of our loved ones to end, and we wait in resolute anticipation, we understand that little will change without action, courage, and conviction.

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### **About Drug User Liberation Front**

Formed in response to the ever-mounting overdose deaths in BC and across Canada, the Drug User Liberation Front looks to provide tangible solutions to this devastating crisis.

### **About British Columbia Association People on Opiate Maintenance**

*Vancouver*

The British Columbia Association of People on Opiate Maintenance (BCAPOM) was originally formed in 1999 by a group of people on methadone, but we now include people on all forms of opiate maintenance. Our mission is to support, protect and defend opiate maintenance users' rights to live free from obstacles caused by prejudice and stigma. BCAPOM educates people about methadone and prescription opiates, and the fight for fair and just access to the opiate medication of our choosing. Our BCAPOM meetings are a place where you can meet people who face the same issues and work together to improve the system for all.

### **About Bridging the Gap**

*Port Alberni*

Bridging the Gap is an organization of Peers with lived experience supporting, advocating and providing services to peers in-community who are suffering from substance illness, mental illness or homelessness. The power of Bridging the Gap rests in the respect and trust that peers in-community hold for those that have journeyed their path.

### **About Coalition of Peers Dismantling the Drug War**

*Vancouver*

The CPDDW exists to change policy and empower people who use drugs, both by filling systemic gaps in healthcare provision, and through long-term systems change. We seek to reclaim knowledge that has been stolen from drug users and then used by the Canadian Healthcare System in inadequate and damaging ways. Indeed, after many disappointments in our attempts to work within the medical industrial complex, we have lost faith that the current healthcare regime supports drug user's involvement in a meaningful or non-tokenistic way. To this end, we seek to collaborate with existing drug user-run institutions in an attempt to battle the current ramifications of what we have dubbed "the Crisis of Prohibition".

### **About Coalition of Substance Users of the North**

*Quesnel*

The Coalition of Substance Users of the North (CSUN) is an alliance of people who use or have used currently illegal drugs. Our members are dedicated to improving life for all substance users who live in Northern BC and throughout Canada. CSUN supports substance users by facilitating the development of programs, services, and resources for our community members. CSUN provides regional representation and community-based participation in BC's and Canada's overall response to the toxic supply crisis and any and all matters impacting people who use drugs.

### **About East Kootenay Network of People who Use Drugs**

*Kimberly*

The East Kootenay Network of People who Use Drugs (EKNPUD) aims to create accessible, low barrier, on the spot support for People Who Use Drugs. EKNPUD also aims to liberate consciousness and dismantle the drug war by any fucking means necessary, while creating community and agency for PWUD.

### **About Kootenay Insurrection for Safe Supply**

*Nelson*

The Kootenay Insurrection for Safe Supply (KISS) is an ad hoc advocacy & direct-action collective formed for the exclusive purpose of working to end British Columbia's toxic illicit drug crisis by replacing the deadly unregulated illicit drug supply with a regulated supply of drugs of known composition & potency. We are individuals living in the West Kootenay region who are united in grief for those we have lost & by our shared anger at the lack of meaningful action to end this crisis.

### **About Maple Ridge Street Outreach Society**

*Maple Ridge*

Maple Ridge Street Outreach Society (MRSOS) is networking, support, advocacy and education by and for people that use drugs to build our capacity and community support.

### **About Mountainside Harm Reduction Society**

#### *Chilliwack*

A new society based in Chilliwack that provides peer support services and harm reduction supplies. Mountainside Harm Reduction Society's main mandate is to provide education, advocacy and support to aid in the development of a permanent OPS in Chilliwack.

### **About Nanaimo Area Network of Drug Users**

#### *Nanaimo*

Nanaimo Area Network of Drug Users (NANDU) is a group of people who use(d) illegal drugs who provide user-to-user support, education and advocacy.

### **About Northern Sun Helpers**

#### *Fort St John*

A support group for individuals and families struggling with chaotic patterns of substance use in the North.

### **About SOLID Outreach**

#### *Victoria*

SOLID is a non-profit organization that provides peer-based health education and support services to reduce the harms associated with drug use in Victoria. Our mandate is to provide accessible pathways to health and treatment for individuals who are street-involved. Our immediate goal is to help our members stay alive during their most difficult times so that they will have the opportunity to improve their lives with the proper support in place.

### **About Tenant Overdose Response Organizers**

#### *Vancouver*

TORO aims to reduce tenant overdoses and promote the well-being of tenants living in SROs, through a culture of respect, dignity, honour and empowerment. The TORO project's personalized peer harm reduction program builds on existing communities of care among SRO tenants, supplying them with the resources necessary to share knowledge, experience, emotional and practical support in the face of the overdose crisis.

### **About Uniting Northern Drug Users**

#### *Prince George*

Uniting Northern Drug Users (UNDU) is an Indigenous-led, peer run, grassroots drug user group

operating in the unceded lands of the Lheidli T'enneh. We provide harm reduction services/supplies, outreach, education, training, advocacy, peer support, and low-barrier employment.

### **About Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users**

*Vancouver*

The Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) was formed in 1998 to bring together groups of people who use drugs. VANDU is committed to increasing the capacity of people who use illicit drugs to live healthy and productive lives. We do this by affirming and strengthening people who use illicit drugs to reduce harm both to themselves and their communities.

### **About Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society**

*Vancouver*

The Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society (WAHRS) is a group of urban Aboriginal peoples who live, work, and play in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. All of our members are current or former illicit drug and/or illicit alcohol users, and we come from all nations – Ojibwe, Cree, Mohawk, and more. We work to give our members a voice, teach advocacy, to empower our people to fight for themselves, and to educate different people about our members' strengths and challenges.



