

Honourable Niki Sharma
Attorney General
PO Box 9044 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

October 5, 2023

RE: Request for investigation into allegations of public funds used to support criminal activity

Dear Minister Sharma,

I am writing to you requesting an investigation into the expenditure of \$1.2 million of public funds in the 2021/2022 budget year by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH) to support two organizations involved in the purchase of illicit drugs and drug trafficking. I am also asking for an investigation into the research and support of these organizations by the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), which as you are aware, receives public funding, and provides research and policy advice to your government.

A total of \$200,000 was granted to the Drug User Liberation Front (DULF), and \$1,000,000 was granted to The Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU). This \$1.2 million funding total does not include any additional funding provided by Vancouver Coastal Health for the 2022/2023 budget year, which has not yet been publicly disclosed.

I first became aware of the use of public funds being allocated to (DULF) and (VANDU), in a media report in [The Economist](#), dated September 8, 2023.

“What dulf does is illegal, and we know that, and the police know it,” he said, yet “nobody’s been arrested because we’ve built such a huge group of people around it.” dulf is funded by the regional health authority as an overdose-prevention site, and by the Centre on Substance Use as a research project.”

In the article, DULF stated that it uses cryptocurrency to purchase illicit drugs on the dark web marketplace and that the drugs were tested and then trafficked at their store, which was described as a “secret location in Vancouver’s downtown east side.”

As you likely know, the dark web is a primary operating platform for organized crime, gangs, and drug cartels. It is a source of human trafficking, illegal weapons, and child pornography, and is a funding stream for criminal activity and terrorism. It is my opinion, as a former police officer, and on behalf of the Official Opposition, that it is wholly inappropriate for public funds to go to support in any way, organizations that would purchase, or support the procurement of illicit drugs or any other materials from the dark web.

In an October 3, 2023, publication of [Press Progress](#), the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Jennifer Whiteside, acknowledged that a government partner is engaged in this criminal activity and stated, “The contract between VCH and DULF is explicitly for drug checking, overdose prevention training, and harm reduction services.”



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However, in an interview with [Global BC](#) on September 28, 2023, a representative from DULF stated funding was used to set up a facility for its compassion club, providing overdose prevention services and hiring administrative staff. This appears to be in contravention of the VCH contract. In consideration of the secretive nature of DULF's location, it is inappropriate that this organization would receive public funding to provide harm reduction services to the public.

I am also deeply concerned your government is relying on research that may be influenced by unsanctioned and illegal activity at DULF. [Researchers](#) from the BCCSU have been working collaboratively with DULF and VANDU, on a research framework to study their compassion club models, which involve the procurement of illicit drugs and drug trafficking. VANDU, which is publicly partnered on the project, has been openly engaged in drug trafficking in Vancouver for several years, a fact that has been widely reported by the media.

This ongoing partnership persisted despite Health Canada's rejection of an exemption for the study in July 2022. What is deeply troubling is the apparent involvement of BCCSU's researchers in the study, along with your government's continued funding support, despite the awareness that the study's activities were illegal.

As such, I am asking you, as the Attorney General of British Columbia to launch an immediate investigation into this criminal activity, including:

1. A forensic audit to determine how all public funds were used by VANDU and DULF; and
2. An independent review of all research material which has been approved or directed by any individuals at the BCCSU, who have been involved with DULF and/or VANDU.

British Columbians expect that their tax dollars will be spent both ethically and legally, and it is unacceptable if public money is being used in a way that supports organized crime. Whether public funds were converted to cryptocurrency for the purchase of illicit drugs, or regardless of any in-kind support by the BCCSU, it is our responsibility to ensure public money is not used to support criminal activity of any kind.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to hearing from you in the immediate future.

Sincerely,

Elenore Sturko
BC United Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Addiction, Recovery & Education
MLA, Surrey South



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cc: MLA Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
MLA Adrian Dix, Minister of Health
MLA Michael de Jong, Shadow Minister for Attorney General
MLA Shirley Bond, Shadow Minister for Health