



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable Selina Robinson
Minister of Post Secondary Education
PO Box 9010 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

November 17, 2023

RE: Request for investigation into allegations of criminal activity and breach of research ethics

Dear Minister Robinson,

I am writing to you today to request an investigation into the allegations of criminal activity and breach of research ethics at the University of Victoria.

As you are aware, there is an ongoing police investigation relating to drug trafficking by the Drug Users Liberation Front (DULF). Their operations were supported over the last two fiscal years by your government in the sum of more than \$430,000 taxpayer dollars.

Several publicly available documents and news articles point to the involvement of the University of Victoria as a partner in research done by DULF, along with the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), which is a UBC Faculty of Medicine affiliated centre.

The University of Victoria was allegedly involved in testing, and movement back and forth of batches of illicit drugs, purchased by DULF off the dark web, for the purpose of selling to members of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU). This illegal trafficking and sales activity is not described in Subsection 56(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act related to class exemption in relation to urgent public health needs, nor is this activity described as authorized under Ministerial Order 488/2016.

Additionally, data collected from the testing and the trafficking of these illegal drugs was allegedly being collected and collated with the assistance of the Director of Research for the BCCSU, who is also a member of the faculty at the University of British Columbia.

We have also recently become aware of donations made to DULF by faculty of the University of Victoria, and, as you are aware, it is these types of donations, which DULF claims to have converted to cryptocurrency for the purpose of trafficking. It would be concerning to the public to know one of B.C.'s top universities may be involved in criminal activity, and their faculty members are providing material and financial support.



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According to the [BCCSU website](#):

“All research conducted by BCCSU Principal Investigators is subject to rigorous, independent ethical review processes through the Research Ethics Boards (REB) associated with the Principal Investigator’s home research institution(s) and, when applicable, of health regions and/or health service organizations (e.g., universities, provincial health authorities, hospitals, etc.) where data collection will occur.”

As such, I am requesting that all ethics reviews from the University of Victoria, and the University of British Columbia associated with the study of the compassion club model be made public. Materials required for review include a detailed study protocol, relevant legal exemptions, and an ethics certificate confirming approval. As you know, these materials are required in order to protect human subjects and members of the public. They do not contain confidential information and their immediate release is vital to preserving the public’s trust in research activities conducted by B.C.’s universities. I also request any details of financial contributions by any B.C. university faculty members.

The public health emergency declared in 2016 has allowed for extraordinary measures to be taken. However, in extending beyond normal practices, we must ensure that extra caution is taken to prevent abuse. It is even more important under these circumstances, where individuals and organizations feel compelled to do all they can to save lives, that we ensure that the law is followed, proper research and ethics procedures are undertaken, and our methods are beyond reproach.

Sincerely,

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

cc: MLA Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
MLA Coralee Oakes, Shadow Minister for Post Secondary Education