



The Honourable Harry Bains  
Minister of Labour  
PO Box 9206 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9T5

**April 17, 2024**

RE: Failing to protect healthcare workers from toxic drugs and drug-induced violence

Dear Minister Bains,

I am writing to you today with concerns regarding the safety of healthcare workers and patients in hospitals across the province.

Your government's reckless decriminalization experiment has created a free-for-all for open drug use — shockingly, even within our public hospitals. Healthcare workers now face unprecedented levels of exposure to open drug use such as toxic fumes from meth and fentanyl. This increased exposure, and reports of drug-induced violence against nurses are escalating the health and safety concerns of healthcare workers in every hospital in British Columbia.

One report details methamphetamine being smoked in a unit just hours after the birth of a newborn. Another nurse who has spoken out had recently returned from maternity leave and was exposed to someone smoking illicit drugs. The exposure was so severe she needed emergency care and was advised to stop breastfeeding because of the risk to her newborn.

I've also heard from a nurse at the Shuswap Lake Hospital, who described to me his experience of walking into a bathroom to aid a patient, only to be met with thick, acrid smoke. This smoke turned out to be fentanyl. The nurse explained how this danger could easily happen to any unsuspecting patient or nurse visiting the hospital restroom.

Even in areas where drug use is supposedly prohibited, nurses are instructed to hand out "burner kits" containing drug paraphernalia to help people safely smoke drugs. Meanwhile, hospitals across the province have to install lockboxes since patients' weapons cannot be confiscated.

Stories such as these, are emerging in hospitals throughout British Columbia. They clearly illustrate unsafe working conditions and a failure to take sufficient precautions to prevent work-related injuries or illnesses.

In fact, since the beginning of decriminalization, 36 health care workers have officially filed WorkSafe BC time-loss claims that were accepted for exposure to substances in the workplace. Of these 36 workers, 14 were nurses.

In November 2022, I note that WorkSafeBC penalized the Northern Health Authority \$355,244.39 after the employer failed to ensure that a report of the full incident investigation was prepared per



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WorkSafeBC policies in response to violence against a worker in a long-term care facility.

Given this precedent, will other health authorities in the province be subjected to the same discipline for failing to protect nurses from toxic drugs and drug-induced violence?

Sincerely,

Greg Kylo  
MLA, Shuswap

CC: Adrian Dix, Minister of Health  
Shirley Bond, Shadow Minister for Health