

Question 5:

The drug poisoning crisis continues to hit our community hard with Victoria consistently in the top 3 communities for overdose deaths. By May of 2022, 70 people have lost their lives to drug poisoning, putting our community on track to have another year of record deaths. Harm reduction services including safe supply programs are an important part of the continuum of substance use supports.

What actions will you take to address this crisis? What actions will you support? How will you use your position to ensure these services can operate in our community? Are there any specific actions that you would support or not support?

CENTRAL SAANICH	Councilor	KING, Zeb	I am concerned that not enough is being done. I'd be more than happy to work on an action plan that municipalities like Central Saanich could participate in for the betterment of all.
	Councilor	GRAHAM, Christopher	So much of that is provincial, but having had a niece and a cousin die from tainted drug supply, I would full support legalizing and regulating the drug supply.
ESQUIMALT	Mayor	GRACEY, Sonya	If I were elected Mayor I would bring my experience as a registered nurse with harm reduction experience into the municipal hall. I know that safe supply saves lives, and that stigma, poverty, racism and lack of access to safe, suitable health care and housing are major contributors to drug poisoning deaths. I would commit to providing anti-stigma and cultural safety/anti-racism training and regular naloxone inservicing for all municipal staff and community members for free. I would support the development of safe supply / safe use health care sites across the region. I would ensure the municipality is acting in a coordinating capacity to bring together community partners who can ensure suitable social and primary care services are available in this community. I would work to support an anti-stigma campaign locally to ensure we remember that these conversations are about us, about our family members.
	Councilor	MUNKACSI, Chris	This is a crisis situation and a state of emergency has been declared regarding this issue. I would continue to work with Senior levels of government, regional, healthcare and community partners; continue to promote awareness of this devastating issue; advocate for prevention, a safe drug supply and encourage those who are willing to go through the process of rehabilitation if they are able. I would advocate for community resources to help combat this issue.

LANGFORD	Mayor	GOODMANSON, Scott Peter	<p>Without trying to sound like a politician, I don't see how any single level of Government can resolve this crisis on its own.</p> <p>I think to truly eradicate the crisis it is going to take a seriously dedicated cross-government platform that includes funding from the upper two levels of government, combined with direction from the middle level and assistance provided for the lowest level which is most likely to be providing the boots on the ground help.</p> <p>Separately, I think all levels have the ability to change, maybe even help, the crisis. but not the ability to resolve it.</p> <p>I would support and encourage the construction of such a cross governmental platform to allow the best attributes of funding, guidance, and implementation to occur.</p> <p>I would love to get into deeper clarification, but at this point I do not have a proper understanding of the costs, present and desired service levels, success rates, and acceptance of the present harm reduction services.</p>
OAK BAY	Councilor	FARMERE, Raymon	<p>I will make presentation to and ask the provincial and federal government for more funding for more harm reduction services in the community. I support the actions of also making more housing available for these people in addition to finding funding for more safe use harm reduction services.</p> <p>I will use my position again to connect with the CRD, Municipal, Provincial Government, Federal Government Community partners and religious groups to make more funding available for services that will help keep the people safe. There are already some great services in Victoria in place and I would like to help make more of these services available.</p> <p>I would support action that will make more housing and harm reduction services available to ppeople.</p>
	Councilor	SMART, Carrie	<p>I support the provincial government's efforts to decriminalize small amounts of drugs for personal use, and ensure that pharmacies or other providers in Oak Bay are able to prescribe and give out safe supply in line with this initiative. I would work with mayor and council to help ensure the Oak Bay police are properly briefed on enforcement with regards to this initiative.</p>
	Councilor	PATERSON, Esther	<p>I will support regional programs to address the crisis.</p>
	Councilor	GREEN, Cairine	<p>Harm reduction services are key to stemming the tide of drug poisoning and overdoses. As a former Probation Officer in the adult and family criminal justice systems, I know first-hand, that addiction and mental health issues combine to create a truly high-risk, chronic situation for many individuals suffering from these diseases. I will support ongoing efforts to expand harm reduction services and, beyond that, I believe there are systemic changes that can be made to policing, criminal justice, health services and community support services, among others. There is no single approach or single organization that can fully address and resolve these challenges. A holistic approach is needed and, in some cases, residential treatment that provides stability and opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery. A more successful model in the region is the TRC model. Located on the site of the former Youth Custody Centre in View Royal, my understanding is that this program is providing some hope for its residents through a very focused, comprehensive program.</p>

	Councillor	HELME, Roxanne	<p>The toxic drug supply has been an increasingly serious crisis for many years. None of us remain untouched. I know of two classmates of mine at Oak Bay High School whose children have succumbed to the toxic drug supply in our community. The situation is becoming worse in spite of efforts on the part of various levels of government over many years. We know that the "war on drugs" has not worked and in fact has arguably worsened the problem. We know that if we ensure safe supply we will save lives but we also know that drug addiction will continue to devastate those lives. While I support safe consumption sites and the wide distribution of Naloxone, the primary focus of action in my view should be on treatment and eliminating demand for illicit drugs entirely. There have been numerous approaches taken around the world with varying degrees of success (Portugal, Netherlands, Singapore). Thus far the solution has proven to be elusive but we must nonetheless continue aggressively in our search for it.</p>
SAANICH	Mayor	MURDOCK, Dean	<p>As local governments, we can focus on four key approaches to eliminate poisonings from a toxic drug supply in our community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating to senior governments and public health professionals for a safe-supply program administered by health providers. • Focusing on harm reduction by removing barriers to getting medical help during an overdose and improving access to supervised consumption services. • Working with the health authority and Ministry of Health to create available local treatment with health providers that includes access to opioid substitution therapy and eliminating delays for getting into comprehensive treatment programs. • Scaling up prevention efforts with urgent public education on the risks of opioids and eliminating the stigma that stops people from getting help. • Working with senior governments and public health experts to stop the production and imports of non-prescription opioids and pill presses.
	Councillor	BRICE, Susan	<p>I have voted for many motions to advocate to senior Govt to decriminalize small quantities of drugs. I am always listening to the public health doctors and their recommendations on supporting harm reduction services.</p>
	Councillor	MACDOUGALL, Jordan	<p>I'm not in Victoria but in Saanich we need to increase the number of these services as it's not safe for a lot of people looking for help in Victoria.</p>
	Councillor	LANGEVIN, Basil	<p>As a Saanich Councillor, I would be vocal about the need for our community to support efforts to address the drug poisoning crisis. In addition, I would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocate for a safe-supply program administered by the province, • support the opening of safe-injection sites in Saanich, • support providing permanent funding to community-based mutual aid and harm reduction groups.
	Councillor	WESTHAVER, Mena	<p>The drug crisis in Greater Victoria includes Saanich and greatly needs attention. I will be taking action to address the drug crisis, the lack of support services and need for immediate action. I do not want to rush the details of my intentions with you as this issue is far too great to assess in a quick email reply. I would love the conversation and anticipate many with individuals, advocacy groups and those with lived experiences to ensure advocacy and action are implemented where most needed to ultimately see positive change.</p>

Councillor	DE VRIES, Zac	<p>I have been a strong advocate of safe supply and harm reduction. These are essential to address toxicity of drugs and keep people alive so they have a chance. Further to this I advocate for the expansion of availability and diversity of treatment options; when people seek help it needs to be available swiftly. We also need to address gaps, I believe and have advocated that funding follow the individual not the institutions. There is a need to focus on prevention, including housing and support for at risk youth, among other methods. All of our efforts have not been enough but we cannot look away and we must work together; I am not an expert but am a committed partner to this end. First and foremost is being a steady partner, with financial commitments, to the Coalition to End Homelessness and the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness. I will perform this work as a councillor, CRD director and an advocate to the provincial and federal government for our communities.</p>
Councillor	LEIREN-YOUNG, Mark	<p>Years ago I was set to write a book about HIV/AIDS with a friend who's one of Canada's top experts on the subject and our demo chapter was on the importance of harm reduction and safe injection sites. These numbers aren't just statistics to me. I've lost people to this crisis. And I just had someone from Saanich reach out to me about the importance of having access to support for treatment closer to home so that addicts in recovery aren't triggered by the easy access to drugs near downtown Victoria's facilities. So I'm aware of the importance of access to safe injection sites, drug testing and access to treatment for harm reduction and recovery. I'd like to see Saanich work with Island Health to identify where and how they feel our community can and should step up.</p>
Councillor	CHAMBERS, Nathalie	<p>Drug overdose brings tragedy to families throughout British Columbia. Sadly, Greater Victoria is an epicentre of this deadly and complicated crisis. I support maximizing locally accessible mental healthcare services that can focus on high-risk individuals.</p> <p>I support the idea of safe supply, but I admit it's a process that would require careful implementation and clearly demonstrated support from our citizens. I would use my role as a municipal councillor to advocate for a meaningful, effective local government response.</p> <p>Bottom line: it's about saving lives. So how can we not respond with genuine compassion and efficacious measures?</p>
Councillor	REICHERT, Jordan	<p>I support safe supply programs and harm reduction supports, but I also feel that ultimately treatment services to support those who are ready to enter into recovery need to be bolstered significantly to meet the needs of the community. As the only front line health care worker with 15 years working in addictions treatment, I will be a strong advocate to other levels of government to promote more services in these areas and effective, non-divisive dialogue on substance use and treatment in our community.</p>

	Councillor	BONDAROFF, Teale Phelps	<p>Drug poisoning deaths are avoidable, and municipalities have a moral obligation to act in response to this crisis. Policy-making and implementation should be led by the lived experience of people within our communities who use drugs and know the areas of highest need; we should also be guided by the significant body of evidence assessing which interventions work, and which do not.</p> <p>The Four Pillars drug strategy, originally implemented in Europe in the 1990s and since expanded to jurisdictions around the world (including Vancouver and other Canadian municipalities) has led to significant drops in drug poisoning deaths, dramatically reduced the number of drug users consuming drugs in streets, and reduced rates of new HIV and hepatitis infections. Saanich should develop and implement a culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed drug strategy that is based on these four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement, and I would explore the possibility of working with other municipalities to implement such a policy across the Capital Regional District.</p> <p>Saanich can also take direct action by moving to increase supportive housing and working with police to implement an approach to drug policy that recognizes the reality that enforcement alone is not an adequate solution. Collaboration with, and increased funding for, social and mental health supports within Saanich are crucial to effectively addressing community needs. As a municipality, we can also work on prevention initiatives that aim to delay, reduce, or avoid substance use.</p> <p>The drug poisoning crisis is complex and requires coordination across municipal, provincial, and federal governments. As councillor, I would use my position to advocate for increased harm-reduction policies like safe supply, decriminalization, naloxone distribution, and safe consumption sites, as well as treatment interventions like increasing the number of in- and out-patient treatment and recovery options and expanding the use of drug treatment courts.</p>
SIDNEY	Councillor	DUNCAN, Sara	<p>Sidney currently is only beginning to see the overdose crisis become an ongoing issue for our first responders. I would support that our municipality begin reviewing with our first responder and medical personnel what best practices that have already been implemented in Victoria and other large cities need to be implemented in our town, now. Likely we may need to begin working with the downtown businesses to distribute naloxone kits, and begin training more citizens on identifying when an overdose may be taking place, and how to use the kits. We may need to discuss whether we yet have a need to require a safe injection site, or have the capacity to deliver that service – and if not, begin building that capacity.</p>
SOOKE	Councillor	BELFORD, Susan	<p><i>What actions will you take to address this crisis?</i> I will put forward a motion that the District of Sooke call upon senior governments to rapidly institute a safe supply.</p> <p><i>What actions will you support? How will you use your position to ensure these services can operate in our community? Are there any specific actions that you would support or not support?</i> I commit to consulting with local harm reduction agencies to discover what they need from Council, and work to ensure they get it.</p>
	Councillor	RUSSELL, Anna	<p>Many years ago, I worked on a tripartite (federal, provincial, municipal) initiative to respond to a drug overdose death crisis in Vancouver’s DTES. While we certainly did not solve many problems, this was the time when Vancouver opened the first safe injection site in BC. We worked in a four-pillars approach that included harm reduction - a major change in policy at the time. It’s horrible to see this crisis explode across BC. I have not worked in the field for years and don’t consider myself an expert. I would welcome an opportunity to learn more about how we can respond to this crisis in Sooke and within the region and based on my previous work I would consider all possible solutions on their own merits, including safe supply, for which I believe there is considerable evidence in the research</p>

VICTORIA	Mayor	ALTO, Marianne	I've worked to support the continuum of harm reduction services for decades, as a community advocate, political aide and in my professional life. As a Councillor I introduced the city to its role and responsibility of convening health professionals for discussion about better delivery and distribution of mental health and addiction services. As harm reduction programs expand to include a wide range of options, and the poisoned drug epidemic continues unabated, the city has a continuing role to play in advocating for additional harm reduction services distributed throughout the region, and for the regulation of a safe supply of drugs. I will always continue to use (and push) the city's authority to save every life lost to poisoned drugs and inadequate harm reduction services. As my platform says, let's start with the global benefit provided by bringing more health practitioners to Victoria with housing, financial and practice incentives for health professionals and the wellness workers that support and assist them; permissive tax exemptions for not-for-profit health societies, health co-operatives and clinics with doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals and wellness workers; support for training spaces for wellness workers; and passionate advocacy for harm reduction services throughout the region, and a safe, regulated drug supply.
	Mayor	ANDREW, Stephen	<p>My Public Safety and Community Wellness for Everyone platform lays out some very specific policy positions on how we care for people struggling with addictions and being preyed upon by criminal elements in the community.</p> <p>My platform commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Mayor's Task Force to Improve Public Safety and Community Wellness – with a diverse range of representatives from the city to focus efforts and provide recommendations to reduce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crime Severity Index - Perception of Crime - Number of overdose calls - Number of calls to bylaw - Time loss by police, bylaw officers, and firefighters due to stress - Criminal exploitation of our vulnerable community members - Graffiti - Other community safety and wellness priorities, including providing 12 new detox beds at the New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community. ● Advocate to the province for a regional policing and community wellness model – together with evidence from the Mayor's Task Force to improve Public Safety and Community Wellness seek incentives to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a scattered regional model for social service delivery. - Present policy to the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board to encourage greater use of integrated regional units to share common resources - Expand collaboration with the community, local, provincial, and federal partners to effectively regionalize solutions to social challenges - Establish a Community Safety Unit for all supported housing in the Capital Region
	Mayor	WIBOLTT, Michelle	Legalize!

	Mayor	FUENTES, Rafael	<p>The drug crisis is also a priority of mine .</p> <p>I would use an approach involving everyone from more policing the drug supply/suppliers to GVEH to other levels of government. ie. to buy more housing but add more resources within them. Counselling and support/health authority .</p> <p>And finally , each homeless person has a different story and treat each person accordingly/holistically . ie start with basic housing and see what each person really wants help with .</p>
	Councilor	THOMPSON, Dave	<p>Addressing the drug poisoning crisis will require action at all levels of government (municipal governments simply do not have jurisdiction or financial capacity to get results in all the required areas), and solutions need to be implemented across the region, and in communities throughout the province, and the country. So Victoria will need to advocate for those other governments to do their part. Among the changes that will be needed and that I would support are: more available drug testing; safe and medically regulated supply; treatment beds and detox for people who are seeking care; funding for harm reduction; and medical staff who can help address infections from intravenous drug use. Substance use needs to be treated as the medical issue that it is.</p>
	Councilor	YACOWAR, Tony	<p>Harm reduction over enforcement; prevention and treatment need to be prioritized as well. I think we need to improve drug education to include harm reduction principles as well as prevention messaging. We also need to expand drug education for our police officers to include de-escalation tactics, as well as training in administering naloxone.</p> <p>With the upcoming three-year exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, I would commit Council to studying the effect of this initiative on the drug crisis in Victoria. The results gathered will help inform evidence-based decisions on drug policies. I would like to see the data gathered be made public so it can be used as open source material for others to analyze as well.</p>
	Councilor	CARADONNA, Jeremy	<p>I will do everything in my power to expand harm reduction, decriminalize drug usage, support a safe supply, and generally reimagine drug usage through a health and well-being lens. The toxic drug supply is harming our citizens every day and it's totally unacceptable. There are now excellent models in Europe about how to rethink this issue entirely. Prior to the pandemic, dr. Bonnie henry was moving ahead on decriminalizing drugs and i will be lobbying the province hard to move ahead with those plans. Cities obviously do not control all aspects of drug policy but cities are on the front lines of the toxic drug crisis.</p>

	Councillor	LOUGHTON, Krista	<p><i>What actions will you take to address this crisis?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to the dissemination of safe supply both on the part of potential participants and those prescribing safe supply need to be addressed • Work to lessen the stigma around using safe consumption sites and drug checking facilities • Expand street level provision of safe supply, as well as methadone and suboxone <p><i>What actions will you support?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 5 pillars identified by the City of Victoria, including prevention, treatment, harm reduction, housing and enforcement need to be fully implemented • Working with the province to expand mental health outreach and addiction treatment • On demand detox and treatment • Concerted effort on prevention • Address the underlying issues resulting in the adoption and dependence upon harmful substances • The treatment of trauma needs to be massively increased <p><i>How will you use your position to ensure these services can operate in our community?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a leadership role. The city has just hired its first social planner, who isn't working to address these issues. Other larger and smaller communities have a number of social and community planners advancing strategies and taking leadership on social issues. Victoria relies heavily on our excellent community based health and social service providers but we need leadership at the city staff level to drive the change we need in a sustained way. • Prevention and education to promote wellness and awareness for high school students <p><i>Are there any specific actions that you would support or not support?</i></p> <p>I would not support an approach that isn't health and housing first. We need all the pillars but we are way further behind on these two and we will get nowhere without them.</p>
	Councillor	COLEMAN, Christopher Mark	<p>I have always been supportive of safe supply programs but they have to be supplied in the context of the "Four Pillar" approach. Going back in fairly recent history for this discussion, it has to be kept in mind that the "Housing First" model was developed when we talked of a "Four Pillars" approach, having the "enforcement" wing ingrained in the model. This pillar was lost when discussions moved to the "Three Pillar" approach.</p>
	Councillor	KIM, Susan	<p>This crisis is unacceptable and preventable. I will use my position on council to champion harm reduction and safe supply initiatives at the council table, in the community and with other communities across the province and beyond. I will also consult with drug users and drug user groups, who are the experts on what is needed to save lives.</p> <p>Some actions I support include increased safe consumption sites and harm reduction practices, policies and organizations; easier access to harm reduction supplies for and through front-line service agencies; scaling up Victoria's safe supply programs, SAFER; and expanding the Vancouver Island drug checking project. From there, I strongly support creating strong communities and support intake systems once access spaces to safe supplies and consumption sites are established.</p> <p>I will also lobby the provincial and federal governments to declare this the public health emergency that it truly is, and ask these governments to revisit their roles in this crisis, and provide the supports to the municipal governments who have already taken on the lion's share of this work.</p>
	Councillor	ORCHERTON, Steve	<p>Provincial and local strategies on this situation are simply not working.</p>

	Councilor	KING, Anna	Having worked in the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver for 3 years, I've visited safe injection sites. Safe injection sites save lives and for this reason, I will support these services. I currently live 450m from a methadone treatment centre and feel no negative effects of the clinic in our neighbourhood. I will support the development of new harm reduction sites. Safe supply programs are also necessary to prevent drug-related deaths, so I will also support safe supply programs and locations. Moreover, Victoria also needs more supportive recovery housing all over the city. We need to work with the provincial government to provide wrap-around care.
	Councilor	GARDINER, Marg	<p>The City, neighbouring municipalities, and the Provincial government have failed those with mental illness and/or drug addiction. Harm reduction is a critical priority and is step one in the City's commitment of a Five Pillar approach for those who are unable to care for themselves: prevention, harm reduction, treatment/recovery, enforcement, and housing.</p> <p>I am concerned that many of those most vulnerable, by migrating to Victoria, have lost important family support. This comment comes from family experience with someone with schizophrenia.</p> <p>I will not pretend to have all the knowledge to say what we should do. Nor will I speak to which drugs are best to make available to those who are addicted and either not seeking recovery services or sadly not able to access services due to insufficient facilities. I would lean to Island Health for leadership in this area.</p> <p>However, I do understand the crisis and steps to resolution must be a priority for the City, the Region and the Province. It is imperative we all work together on this crisis.</p>
	Councilor	DUNCAN, Rob	As indicated in my platform, I would advocate for greater availability of and faster access to detox programs, combined with relocation to appropriate housing (that is, not the person's previous accommodation and social situation) on exiting a detox program. I would also advocate for the establishment of a safe supply program.
	Councilor	PARENTEAU, Emmanuel	Complex care facilities where street drugs can be monitored (as mentioned in my answer to Question 1) would, in my current opinion, be the most effective safety tool for the street and drug using community once these facilities existed.
VIEW ROYAL	Councilor	MACKENZIE, Alison	I strongly agree that it is important to have as many people as possible trained on providing life-saving care in the case of an overdose. As such, I would eagerly encourage workplaces in View Royal to support training for their employees, including providing it for Town staff.
	Councilor	BROWN, Don	The drug poisoning crisis is of grave concern to me and should be for all individuals living in our area. As a former police officer I have seen this first hand. Safe injection sites are very important. Also more training for first responders to be able to react and save individuals who are overdosing.