

Demonstrations to be held across Canada on National Day of Action on the Overdose Crisis Lives Won't Wait for Government Action

VANCOUVER, COAST SALISH TERRITORY– As part of events taking place across Canada, drug user advocacy organizations, first responders, service providers, neighbours, supporters and loved ones will gather at Oppenheimer Park, Tuesday at noon for a rally and march.

Representatives will be holding a press conference Monday at noon at Carnegie Community Centre on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Demonstration organizers are demanding immediate action from all levels of government, including legislative and policy overhaul, increased resources and reform in the areas of health, social services and policing.

"Drug users are dying. Our community is mourning and angry," said Jordan Westfall, president of the Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs. "Our lives won't wait. But Canada's Minister of Health won't meet us and the government can't look us in the eye," Westfall said.

"We lost our treasurer to overdose in January," said Garth Mullins, a harm reduction activist who works with the B.C. Association of People on Methadone and other community groups. "This crisis is crying out for more treatment options, like prescription heroin. Yet B.C. is stalling – more worried about votes than lives," he said.

Karen Ward of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users said, "ending the drug war and legalizing heroin is the answer. That would put a quick end to the fentanyl-flooded street drug market."

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PRESS CONFERENCE:

The individuals quoted above and other affected community members will be announcing Day of Action demands and available for comment on:

- Monday, February 20
- 12:00 pm (noon)
- In front of Carnegie Community Centre
- 401 Main Street

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Supporting organizations include:

- Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs.
- Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
- Canadian HIV AIDS Legal Network
- Hives for Humanity
- BC Association for People on Methadone,
- Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
- and others