

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to you today on a matter of urgent public interest that directly affects every municipality in British Columbia.

Recent investigative reporting by Canadian journalist Sam Cooper stated that the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) provided Canadian authorities with intelligence on fentanyl precursor shipments as early as 2022, according to U.S. officials. Despite these warnings, the RCMP allegedly refused to cooperate with U.S. law enforcement and delayed meaningful action for nearly two years. When Canadian police finally acted, they allegedly did so without informing the DEA beforehand. DEA Administrator Derek Maltz reportedly described the RCMP's conduct as "disgusting."

This is not just a diplomatic criticism. It is a message to Canadians that federal enforcement agencies are failing to protect our people from transnational crime while senior governments shift blame downward. Rather than accept accountability, federal and provincial governments have allowed a narrative to take root: that municipalities are responsible for the visible consequences — homelessness, overdoses, and disorder.

But local governments do not set border policy, license labs through Health Canada, or control RCMP cooperation with international partners. Yet it is municipalities left holding the bag: facing strained budgets, reputational damage, and broken communities. It is our streets, our shelters, and our emergency room staff that bear the visible burden of these systemic failures.

Meanwhile, both the provincial and federal governments continue to pursue business with China — including the purchase of ferries worth over half a billion dollars — while fentanyl from the same source floods our communities. The contradiction is stark: municipalities are left under-resourced and scapegoated, while senior governments profit from trade relationships that undermine community safety. This is victim-blaming dressed up as policy.

And imagine this: you may not even know if a fentanyl "superlab" is operating within your municipal boundaries right now. These facilities do not sprout in Ottawa or Beijing — they surface in our towns, our industrial parks, or behind unassuming storefronts. When senior governments and the RCMP fail to act, it is our local services that are left to shoulder the burden.

We must reject this scapegoating. Our residents — including those suffering from addiction — are victims, not villains. Addiction is a public health issue, not a crime to be punished with stigma. Yet stigma remains the default tool of deflection for senior officials and the RCMP. Worse still, it appears that our own municipal forces have at times mirrored these tactics.

Former Mayor Richard Atwell himself reported harassment while in office, alleging routine targeting by Saanich Police. Local media, such as the Times Colonist, then appeared to echo SPD's stigmatizing framing, dismissing community concerns as conspiracy or instability, according to a later report by publisher of Focus Magazine, David Broadland. These tactics silence legitimate questions, shield misconduct, and prevent accountability.

The lesson is clear: the problem is not confined to the border or the RCMP. When a sitting mayor is harassed by municipal police, when journalists are charged for asking uncomfortable questions, and when stigma is wielded as a weapon, the rule of law itself is undermined. The respect due to titles such as "His Worship" or "Your Honour" becomes meaningless when authorities like SPD — or their regulator, the OPCC — act above accountability.

This is why municipal unity matters. Municipalities cannot solve these complex, national problems alone. But municipalities can act together. Collective action strengthens our voice in demanding transparent cooperation with international partners, proper resourcing for emergency services, and oversight mechanisms that actually work. Municipal unity is the practical alternative to being scapegoated: coordinated advocacy, shared strategies, and mutual support protect residents more effectively than isolated efforts.

The Path Forward

Municipalities must stand together. By uniting, councils can:

- Acknowledge the true source of the crisis — systemic failures at the federal and provincial level — and reject narratives that scapegoat municipalities.
- Share strategies and stand in solidarity, recognizing that those affected by addiction are victims of systemic neglect, not moral failure.

- Demand accountability in local policing and media, which should serve the community rather than stigmatize it.
- Advocate collectively for senior governments to stop passing blame downward and to address the real enablers of organized crime.

When U.S. officials call Canadian policing “disgusting,” it should be a wake-up call. The failures are systemic — from RCMP stonewalling, to SPD’s treatment of its own mayor, to media that reinforces stigma instead of truth. Local governments cannot afford to remain divided or silent.

By uniting, municipalities can change the narrative, demand accountability at every level, and protect their citizens from both organized crime and institutional misconduct. Municipal unity that is truly for Canadians is worth standing up for — and worth keeping an eye on: who is stepping forward, and who is not.

I would like to draw attention to the leadership shown by Mayor Doug Kobayashi of the City of Colwood, who persevered through stigma and took matters into his own hands by launching a municipally-run family medicine clinic. By hiring its own doctors, providing full benefit packages, and offering primary care to residents who lacked access, Colwood has set a standard of proactive local governance.

Other municipalities should look to this model as evidence that when senior governments fail to act, local innovation can fill critical gaps. Municipal unity means not only standing together to demand accountability, but recognizing and lifting up the successes we already have—so we can replicate them and create solutions for all communities.

I want to close by praising those municipal leaders who have taken it upon themselves to inform others and host discussions that shine a light on these issues. Leaders like Mayor Sid Tobias of the Township of View Royal have shown how municipal initiative can build shared understanding and strengthen unity. Staying informed is paramount to staying safe and protecting our communities.

I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Philip Perras