

Brad West, Chair,
Mayor, City of Port Coquitlam

Mary-Ann Booth, Vice-Chair,
Mayor, District of West
Vancouver

Sav Dhaliwal,
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board

Gary Ander,
Mayor, Bowen Island

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Chief, Tsawwassen
First Nation

Malcolm Brodie,
Mayor, City of Richmond

Linda Buchanan,
Mayor, City of North
Vancouver

Jonathan Coté,
Mayor, City of New
Westminster

Bill Dingwall,
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Jack Froese,
Mayor, Langley Township

George Harvie,
Mayor, City of Delta

Mike Hurley,
Mayor, City of Burnaby

Mike Little,
Mayor, District of
North Vancouver

Doug McCallum,
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Jen McCutcheon,
Director, Electoral Area A

John McEwen,
Mayor, Village of Anmore

Ron McLaughlin,
Mayor, Village of Lions Bay

Mike Morden,
Mayor, City of Maple Ridge

Jamie Ross,
Mayor, Village of Belcarra

Kennedy Stewart,
Mayor, City of Vancouver

Richard Stewart, Mayor,
City of Coquitlam

Rob Vagramov,
Mayor, City of Port Moody

Val van den Broek,
Mayor, Langley City

Darryl Walker,
Mayor, City of White Rock

March 26, 2021

The Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
PO Box 9010 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
VIA EMAIL: PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Office of the Chair
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File: CR-12-01
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The Honourable Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
PO Box 9672 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9P6
VIA EMAIL: MH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Farnworth and Minister Malcolmson:

Mental Health Services and Policing

On behalf of the Metro Vancouver Board, I am writing to urge the Provincial Government to increase access to mental health services to partner and support police in all Metro Vancouver communities.

At its March 26, 2021 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Metro Vancouver Regional District (Metro Vancouver) adopted the following resolution initiated by Metro Vancouver's Mayors Committee:

That the MVRD Board send a letter to the Province and the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act requesting increased regional access to mental health services to partner and support police in all Metro Vancouver communities.

Metro Vancouver's Mayors Committee, representing all 23 member jurisdictions, provides advice and recommendations to the Metro Vancouver Board on pan-municipal issues. The Committee recently received a presentation from the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) on the department's Mental Health Programs, which provided important insights into an issue that extends across the Metro Vancouver region.

In particular, the Committee learned about the VPD's partnership program with Vancouver Coastal Health, Car 87, which pairs a VPD plainclothes officer with a registered nurse to provide on-site assessments and intervention for people living with mental illness. The high demand for the service not only reveals that this an important program for the community, but also calls into focus the extent of work that still needs to be implemented to increase regional access to mental health services and support police forces in all Metro Vancouver communities.

VPD's data shows that 17 per cent of calls for service that resulted in a written report in 2020 involved individuals suffering from a mental illness. That number has been relatively consistent for the last five years, and is considered an underestimation. In B.C., the RCMP responded to more than 60,000 *Mental Health Act* occurrences in 2018 and 2019, which is believed to be an undercount.

There is an acute and urgent need to increase support for mental health services and policing programming that fulfill similar objectives as Car 87. The 23 member jurisdictions, both prior to and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been expending tremendous resources to address mental health issues in their communities. Many local police agencies have established their own mental health units and programs through partnerships with health authorities and community groups, and have provided extra training for officers. However, without additional senior government support, municipalities and their police departments are unable to maintain the necessary service levels that these issues demand and deserve.

We are encouraged by recent provincial initiatives to address social and health impediments. Your ministries are leading important work to further invest in more community-based mental health and social services to allow more trained front-line workers to help people in crisis, and subsequently enable police to focus on protecting the community. In addition, the all-party Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act, mandated by the BC Legislative Assembly to undertake a broad inquiry into policing, including examining the role of police with respect to complex social issues, provides another opportunity to address these challenges.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health have been well documented and are reinforced by the increasing demand placed on programs such as Car 87. The quick response to the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted your government's ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances, and to rapidly implement emergency solutions to support British Columbians requiring emergent care. We hope that the Provincial Government will similarly respond to this challenge by increasing regional access to mental health services to partner and support police in all Metro Vancouver communities.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to the needs of British Columbians. We look forward to hearing more about how your ministries can successfully support our region and province on these critical issues.

Yours sincerely,



Sav Dhaliwal
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board

Yours sincerely,



Brad West
Chair, Metro Vancouver Mayors Committee