

Dear Mayor Alan Harrison & Salmon Arm City Councilors

August 16, 2024

Cc Darin Gerow, ASCT | Manager of Roads & Parks

Cc Catherine Auld, Mental Health & Substance Use Clinician with Interior Health

This letter is being presented to you, with hopes of being reviewed and considered at the next regular council meeting. I am writing as a person with lived experience of addiction and as a person in recovery.

One of the most significant outcomes for someone facing an addiction, can unfortunately be death. With this public health crisis ongoing since 2016; I have had the honor of supporting many individuals who have survived in my role as a Peer with *Interior Health* and through my work at the Marshlands shelter / via the *Canadian Mental Health Association*. Amongst the actual people using substances, there are countless other family members, friends and community members who have lost people to toxic drug poisonings in our community.

Last year to commemorate the annual [International Overdose Awareness Day](#) (August 31) I was a part of an education booth with Interior Health and Naskonlith Band; that taught community members how to use Naloxone (the remedy for toxic drug poisoning) at Piccadilly Mall. During this event, countless people from all walks of life shared their stories and recounted their personal connection to “someone” in their lives that has been touched by this crisis.

Since then, we have been exploring options, to establish a “memorial type” structure with a tribute to those lost to this crisis in the Salmon Arm area. This led to speaking with the *Shuswap Foundation*, and considered their memorial walkway – however feedback from the community was that this may get lost “in the shuffle” – and there is a hopefulness for a more substantial memorial that people can gather at. Ideally a bench, like the Penticton community in the link below has established.

[Penticton's Memorial Bench for overdose victims to be unveiled this summer - Penticton Western News](#)

We would like to formally request that a bench with a plaque affixed be allowed to be installed at **Ross Street Plaza, alternatively, a plaque installed on an existing bench at the plaza.** We will be undertaking fundraising campaign similar to the process Penticton initiated, to raise funds for the bench and its installation as well as / or the plaque; and will of course abide by all regulations in doing so.

[International Overdose Awareness Day](#) – is coming up August 31, 2024 – and we would love that to be an opportunity to announce that there will be a bench coming and kick-starting the fundraising campaign.

Thank you so much for your support of the project thus far Darin, and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions at all,

Warm Regards,

Kayla Belcher

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