

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Statement

APRIL 24, 2020

FNLCOFFERS CONDOLENCES IN THE DEATH OF INFANT IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE



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(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and sə́ilwətaʔ/séilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council was deeply saddened to learn of the tragic death of an infant in the Vancouver Downtown Eastside earlier this week and sends sincerest and heartfelt condolences to the mother and all residents of the Downtown Eastside community during this time.

This situation creates deep ripples of grief for a community already faced with many complex and intersecting challenges. The tragic circumstances surrounding this loss of life highlight the many systemic failures that are a reality for many in the Downtown Eastside, and in particular, women and gender-diverse individuals. These issues have been heightened by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Though placed with good intention, it has been brought to our attention that the Port-a-Potties currently placed at Main and Hastings and in the surrounding DTES have added to health and safety challenges for DTES residents, as they are completely enclosed and soundproof, not monitored and are not cleaned after every usage. This means that someone can easily go undetected in a stall for an extended period of time, as was the devastating experience for this mother. As a response to this situation, we would ask that these Port-a-Potties be removed and immediately replaced with trailer-style washrooms with staff and peers monitoring the situation and ensuring appropriate sanitation to avoid COVID transmission. This would provide increased sanitation for Downtown Eastside residents, as well as the ability for peer-support workers to monitor the space and provide immediate support in an emergency.

The Downtown Eastside community is one of great strength and resilience and we send our thoughts to you as you come together to support one another right now. To the mother, we offer our deepest prayers for your health and healing.

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).