

Tuesday, September 29th, 2026

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

CC: All candidates running for Premier of British Columbia, all candidates running for mayor of the City of Vancouver, and all other elected members or running candidates in municipal, provincial, and federal governments across Canada.

Dear Prime Minister Carney et al,

My name is Kurtis Lemon, a 39-year-old Canadian citizen born in Calgary, now living in Vancouver for almost 14 years.

In the shortest form possible, I have experienced tremendous hardship in my life. Both done to me and done to myself.

As a young teenager, I was cast away by my parents for being gay, spent time in shelters and foster homes, dropped out of high school, and was working full-time to support myself at the age of 16. I have made many mistakes and faced many setbacks, which I carry as a badge of honour and regularly share with others.

I was once addicted to gambling. I was once addicted to drugs. I am still addicted to tobacco – that's a tough one. And now, I am severely addicted to the cute little flower shop my partner and I own downtown Vancouver.

Mr. Prime Minister, it was not my childhood dream to make a name for myself as a former drug addict who now owns a flower shop, believe me. But I have decided that, come hell or high water, I am going to move the needle on this subject before I die. Mostly to protect and grow our business and my new family's livelihood, but also to help others achieve sobriety.

The Investment

Mr. Prime Minister, after feeling failed by all participating lenders of the Canada Small Business Financing Program to start a different business, my husband's father gifted us money to buy D&D Flowers – an existing business that was listed for sale.

This man worked the same job for over 30 years in Bogotá, Colombia. As an accountant, he diligently saved as much money as possible. It meant he could afford to send both kids to attend university in Canada, who eventually became Canadian citizens. He and his wife now also live in Canada as Permanent Residents.

Mr. Prime Minister, this gift represents almost this man's entire life savings and work, and he isn't even my birth father. The love, trust, and respect this signifies is not whatsoever lost on me.

I therefore find it incumbent upon myself to do everything in my power and fight every single day to make our business successful. I work hard even when I'm completely exhausted and I keep pressing forward with failure never being a thought or option.

There is only one path: work hard, make it work, ask for help, and adapt when necessary.

The Hustle

Mr. Prime Minister, my partner and I are both on our 128th day in a row without a day off.

I open and close the store 7 days a week. Plus, twice weekly I wake up at 3:45am to go to the flower auction. My partner works a full-time job elsewhere and then joins me at the store afterwards, and we work weekends together.

Mr. Prime Minister, we haven't paid ourselves \$1 since buying this business this April. We are still paying off our initial inventory and startup expenditures from both ventures and currently living off my partner's income. We're prolonging paying ourselves to be extra prudent, but soon we will need to start taking at least a small income.

To be clear, I'm not complaining about that, per se. I have untapped wells of energy and enthusiasm to run and grow this business, and I see incredible potential so far.

But, Mr. Prime Minister, when I see issues that someone else is or should be responsible for, that are being poorly managed or addressed, and they affect our business, I will not stop our mission there and just because it's 'not my issue'. So, I speak up, and freely.

Foot Traffic

Mr. Prime Minister, people passing our store stop, point, and smile at our cute window display all day. They take pictures, peek in the windows, and show all kinds of joy. It's the most satisfying thing to watch on the other side of the glass. They don't always enter, but they remember us.

Mr. Prime Minister, we also witness prolific drug use, street disorder, and crime right on our doorstep and across the street daily. Often, they are very large groups of people.

We are concerned that some people avoid walking down our street altogether when assessing their safety at the intersections, including tourists who are an important part of our sales. We are also concerned that some locals might have permanently changed their footpath routes to avoid our street.

Mr. Prime Minister, every single potential customer that passes our store matters. They need to feel safe and comfortable to slow down and smell the flowers. Very high foot traffic is nearby in all directions. But since our street is often undesirable to walk down, we are missing valuable and completely free opportunities to reach new customers and grow our sales.

The Pants

Mr. Prime Minister, I recently recovered a pair of stolen dress pants just outside our store. I witnessed the alleged thief stop to take a hit of crack and then leave them behind on the ground. I did recover the pants, but due to lack of obvious store-specific branding, was unable to determine who to return them to but the police.

Mr. Prime Minister, in this situation, absolutely everyone loses. The store takes a hit, the police and I likely waste our time, and the thief didn't even get any money or drugs for them. Just stolen property in stasis.

Mr. Prime Minister, the whereabouts of this alleged thief and drug addict is known. He is a resident of 518 Richards Street, a provincially funded SRO, directly across the street from our business.

Mr. Prime Minister, this man looks worse every day I see him. Frankly, I see more of his bare ass than I do his face. He is often so high and out of sorts that he's struggling to hold his loose, soiled sweatpants up.

So, we have a person who needs a new pair of pants, that is stealing pants, but not for his own basic needs. To feed his addiction and give the proceeds to criminals.

Mr. Prime Minister, this man is usually leaving 518 Richards with fresh pieces of tinfoil, most of which he unknowingly drops on the ground unused. He smokes crack in the stairwell of the parkade across the street, indoors, right where parking customers need to pay and enter/exit. He also urinates and defecates there, even though he must surely have those services at his nearby residence.

Mr. Prime Minister, I would argue that this addict's housing situation has clearly not helped him progress towards sobriety and a healthier life. He assumedly steals from retailers every single day to buy drugs and is visibly free to continue doing so.

Mr. Prime Minister, who does it benefit to allow such a person to reside in taxpayer-funded housing, likely receiving a taxpayer-funded welfare income, and be stealing from taxpaying businesses and citizens every day to obtain drugs – with absolutely zero legal or societal consequences?

15x The Cost of the Drugs

Mr. Prime Minister, two months ago, our vehicle window was smashed, and about \$20 worth of change and small items were stolen. They didn't even steal all the coins in our centre console. They're so out of their minds crazy for more drugs, they broke into our car and left legal currency behind.

Then, my partner and I had to spend time we didn't have and pay a \$300 deductible to get it replaced. We are so busy that there is still broken glass under the seats.

This was reported to Vancouver Police along with dashcam footage and a timestamp, which could line up with additional parking lot footage. But other than the initial request to submit our footage, we have not heard anything else. Which leads me to assume the suspects are still at large and breaking into vehicles every day.

Mr. Prime Minister, we paid \$300 for someone to buy \$20 worth of drugs. That's 15x the cost. Not to mention the additional time and money on the part of our provincially owned insurance company.

Mr. Prime Minister, how many good and honest Canadians have paid to replace car windows so that addicts can get one fleeting moment with drugs and then – poof – it's gone? How many millions of dollars in just vehicle windows alone? Is this a good return on our investment and is the money landing in the right hands?

Bodies Everywhere

Mr. Prime Minister, for 5 months now, I've been watching my fellow Canadians walk past people laying lifeless on the sidewalk in front of 518 Richards Street and elsewhere, that, for all anyone knows, could be dead.

Nobody ever stops, nobody ever says anything, nobody even breaks their stride. Everyone just finds a way around and keeps going, as if it were just a fallen maple tree branch.

Mr. Prime Minister, I am one of them. I don't have any extra time, energy, or room for additional stress rolling the dice on what might happen by interacting with such a person and situation. Especially when it's most likely a false alarm, not appreciated, risky, or a host of other completely negligible outcomes.

Mr. Prime Minister, I am truly and deeply concerned that my fellow Canadians are desensitized to seeing bodies on the street and people clearly in medical and mental distress.

So much so that any ordinary Canadian who might be laying on the sidewalk with an invisible injury might not get immediate medical attention that any other Canadian would normally attend to with pride.

Mr. Prime Minister, this behavior is dangerous, un-Canadian, and it must be reversed.

Rock Bottom

Mr. Prime Minister, I can tell you from personal experience that most former addicts will tell you a story about hitting rock bottom. It's different for everyone, but usually something like "I just about lost my wife, just about lost my kids, just about lost my house," or "I did lose everything, and I want it back."

But for most functioning addicts, this rock bottom is an illusion. It's whatever this person thinks is the point they've gone too far, lost too much, or will lose something too important to them. It is not however true rock bottom.

No, Mr. Prime Minister, the people occupying our public spaces today with the most severe mental health and addiction issues are truly at rock bottom. These people have obviously lost everything, have nothing to fight for or get back, and live for nothing but drugs every waking moment of every day.

Mr. Prime Minister, these people sometimes look dead. They sometimes look like they've literally been imprisoned and tortured by drugs. Some of them look like they just escaped a medieval dungeon. Some of them cannot even stand upright anymore. They have infections, they have wounds, they have outbursts, they are not doing well in any key area.

Mr. Prime Minister, I imagine that practitioners tell overdose survivors that their life was saved and why. So, when a person's life is saved a second, third, etc. time due to drug abuse, this person is as close to suicidal as they can get without saying the words.

Are we really just waiting for severe drug addicts to raise their hand asking for help, and hoping that creating some new beds in 2 years is going to save their life today?

No, Mr. Prime Minister, many Canadians like me believe that at least some of these people are a real danger to themselves, and therefore warrant immediate intervention and detainment, whether they remain sober long-term or not.

Consequences & Ultimatums

Mr. Prime Minister, like it or not, I can also tell you from personal experience and talking to other former addicts that getting threatened by someone we loved or needed, that something was going to get taken away, was a big part of our decision to change.

It's a physical and mental addiction, so addicts make all sorts of bargains with themselves to justify their actions and behavior over time.

But there comes a point where it eventually comes down to a serious and life-changing ultimatum or actual consequences – ones the addict still cares about more than drugs – that forces a real effort to change.

But from what I have observed, there are no real or meaningful actions taken against severely addicted, mentally ill, and homeless people who commit crimes, cause disorder, and nearly die in public spaces. And there needs to be.

Mr. Prime Minister, fear of consequences, and then actual consequences, is a vital piece of the fabric that holds Canadian society together. Not obeying crosswalk signals, falsifying tax returns, parking unpaid, spitting on the face of a championship boxer within striking distance – they all have real world consequences.

Mr. Prime Minister, it's time to change our social expectations around these issues. It's time for there to be actual consequences and enforcement again, for both existing laws and crimes, but also severely addicted people who need a serious wake up call.

Whether that's handcuffs, involuntary care, revoking of benefits, or whatever else might be necessary, is not for me to decide. But, Mr. Prime Minister, someone does need to start making these hard decisions and, most importantly, taking immediate action.

Resetting Expectations: Example 1

Mr. Prime Minister, we've also had an issue with graffiti on Richards Street.

Thankfully this has almost always been on property owned by the City of Vancouver, because we're able to report this to the City via the Van311 app, which is in turn immediately shared with the City's contractor, Goodbye Graffiti, for removal.

Mr. Prime Minister, this is an extremely successful arrangement and process. When the graffiti is on City property, it's always removed – usually within a few days.

However, the person or people who continue to do graffiti on our street persisted for months. I submitted report after report of new graffiti, sometimes even the day after it had been removed or painted over.

But because I always report it, they seem to finally be getting the message that it's going to get removed quickly and they're wasting their time – at least on our block. It's now been about 2 weeks since I last reported new graffiti, which is the longest period to date without.

Mr. Prime Minister, what happened here is that I reset expectations that graffiti won't be tolerated and won't stay visible for very long. I will continue to do so for as long as it takes, because there is an effective and rapid method to do so.

It doesn't solve the greater problem, of course. I'm sure they still do graffiti elsewhere. But it is a small win, at least us and our neighbors, which is rightfully important to us.

Resetting Expectations: Example 2

Mr. Prime Minister, with regards to the drug use, street disorder, and occupation of the sidewalk in front of 518 Richards Street, I have been posting videos on Instagram about this and tagging a small number of politicians, including yourself.

And while I have not yet confirmed this, I strongly suspect that someone in provincial government has been paying attention to my videos, contacting the operator of this SRO about my concerns, and mandating a change of actions.

One of those concerns is simply that there is often a group of people laying around so large that they are occupying the entire sidewalk from the edge of the building to the curb. I regularly witness people pushing strollers and pulling luggage need to step off the curb into the bike lane or jaywalk across the street to get around.

Then, one day when I got to the store, the street was completely clear of people and drugs, and a staff member was outside sweeping up garbage. It was as though someone made a phone call and set new expectations.

It was like that for about a week. Then, slowly the standards started to slip, and they didn't keep up with the new routine for very long.

Then I posted another video saying that one week of change wasn't going to cut it. And now again, at least on the days the manager is present, they are trying again – for now.

Mr. Prime Minister, this proves that change is possible without making any major political or legal changes. People simply need to be reminded of their expectations, held accountable, and try just a little harder to do better.

Just Another Holiday

Mr. Prime Minister, a person I did not expect to come into our store and thank me for my videos on Instagram would be the manager of the Native Courtworker and Counselling

Association of BC, directly across the street from our business, and right beside 518 Richards. They provide outpatient addiction and detox support.

This woman and I had a lovely conversation where she candidly told me that they are considering moving their office somewhere else to get away from drug abuse right on their doorstep. She said that many of their clients are asking to do phone appointments instead of coming into the office, to avoid being triggered by drug abuse outside.

Mr. Prime Minister, as the 6th National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is upon us, how is it that our province is still causing new harm to First Nations groups like this one? We have a provincially funded housing project being operated in such a manner that people who want to get and stay sober next door are being subjected to prolific drug use that's physically in their path to recovery, when it doesn't need to be.

Mr. Prime Minister, this is despicable and should not be tolerated. I don't think it's wise for such a longstanding addictions counseling centre to change its whereabouts on its clients. Everything that can be done should be done to protect this group's right to a peaceful tenancy.

Not Even Dribbling

Mr. Prime Minister, Canadians on both sides of the aisle cannot handle one more politician standing at centre court, pointing at the basket, like a mime, with the ball resting between their feet. We can see the whole court with our own eyes and on the big screen, as well as the scoreboard. It's an old act, and it's not funny anymore.

Mr. Prime Minister, in the middle of a losing game, Canadians cannot handle listening to the manager talk about pouring concrete foundation for the new stadium 10 years from now any longer. As important as that may be, we also need to start winning games today.

Mr. Prime Minister, at the core of many issues important to Canadians, there is usually only one basket. We want to see both teams running in the same direction and shooting at the same net, instead of pointing fingers at each other and the ball. We don't even care who scores the point anymore. We just want to see repeated shots on net until there is success.

Mr. Prime Minister, Canadians are tired of seeing players in suits endlessly arguing about how to change the rules and what the other team did two decades ago. We just want to see the game being played and players sweating their asses off. If a rule change is warranted, so be it. Change it, get back to the game, and leave it to the referees.

The Election(s)

Mr. Prime Minister, there is greater uncertainty in British Columbia than ever before. We are now headed to the polls twice to determine who governs almost all aspects of our lives.

If any parties retain control of government, British Columbians can likely just expect more of the same: inaction, poor actions, finger pointing, and lack of visible progress.

If any parties gain control, British Columbians can expect, at best, a lengthy process of enacting change, if any new change or progress at all.

Mr. Prime Minister, how is it that a government with a majority feels that they cannot govern and do not already have a mandate from the people to do its work? This is so indicative of the non-problems manufactured by political parties and politicians today. I hope that British Columbians send a message to the rest of Canada that this is not acceptable.

BC Public Health Emergency, and the Emergencies Act

Mr. Prime Minister, your predecessor evoked the Emergencies Act to cease a protest, where not one person died.

In contrast, over 18,000 people have died from drug abuse in British Columbia since the Public Health Emergency was declared. Over 50,000 have died across Canada since that same time.

Mr. Prime Minister, if that is not reason enough to invoke the Emergencies Act, or act upon the existing BC Public Health Emergency, or take any other similar, accelerated, and aggressive actions to save lives on Canadian soil, God help us all.

Mr. Prime Minister, if I were Prime Minister, I would invoke the Emergencies Act without hesitation. I would do whatever was necessary to cease the overdose death count. I would use all resources, all agencies, and all personnel at the Canadian government's disposal. Full stop and nothing left untried until there was success.

Of course, all the other work must continue to deal with the root causes of many issues.

But Mr. Prime Minister, Canadian taxpayers are tired of hearing "Coast to Coast to Coast," and "building the future," and "that's what we're doing and will continue to do," and so many other politicians' greatest hits.

Enough is enough with the pageantry. Canadians are dying in large numbers, and it's time for us to start taking more swift and appropriate actions to address this crisis without further delay.

Action, Not Words

Mr. Prime Minister, I fully expect you and others to not take my concerns and suggestions seriously. I especially expect you would never invoke the Emergencies Act or take any similar actions to address the nationwide addiction, homelessness, and mental health crises.

But Mr. Prime Minister, if I were Prime Minister, I would not be able to sleep at night, and would not stop, until everything imaginable was done and tried to successfully halt the death count as quickly as possible.

I really don't care whether you declare a national emergency, personally make 10,001 phone calls, or enforce new laws. I just want immediate actions that produce a visible change – whatever is necessary to save lives on Canadian soil.

Mr. Prime Minister, it bears repeating that I am deeply concerned that, if my husband was laying on the pavement with an invisible injury, my fellow Canadians might walk past him without even thinking twice to check if he's okay. This is not the Canada I used to be proud of, and not the one my partner and his family worked so hard to become citizens and residents of.

Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of millions of Canadians who share my sentiments, I plea that you use your power as the Prime Minister of Canada to take new, immediate, and aggressive action on severe drug abuse and associated crime, whatever it may be.

Ultimatums and consequences, Mr. Prime Minister. No addict wants to get sober. They do it because they must.

Without further delay, Mr. Prime Minister. Canadians are dying.

Sincerely,

Kurtis Lemon, Owner
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