



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: March 10, 2006
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TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets
FROM: Drug Policy Coordinator
SUBJECT: Continuation of Drug Policy Program

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council receive for INFORMATION the report on the continuation of the Drug Policy Program staffing and that the following temporary full time positions of Drug Policy Coordinator, Social Planner 1 and Clerk III be converted to Regular Full Time positions subject to review and classification by Human Resources, at an estimated cost of \$230,000 annually including fringe benefits, and \$90,000 program costs for a total annual cost of \$320,000 without offsets (prorated to \$220,000 for 2006). Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2006 Interim Operating Budget.
- B. That Council receive for INFORMATION an update of Drug Policy Program activities 2003 - 06, next steps for the Drug Policy Program and an update on new initiatives within the four pillars of Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction and Enforcement.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services presents this report for information. Addiction is a major issue in the City and the Drug Policy Program plays a key role, working with health and enforcement partners, in developing prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement strategies.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager presents this report for information.

COUNCIL POLICY

In April of 2000 City Council approved the creation of the position of Drug Policy Coordinator.

In May of 2001 Council approved the Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver.

In March of 2003 Council approved extension of the Drug Policy Program for a period of three years.

In November of 2005 Council approved the prevention plan "Preventing Harm from Psychoactive Drug Use".

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the activities of the Drug Policy Program from 2003 - 2006. It outlines progress to date in addressing problematic drug use in Vancouver, highlights some of the initiatives that have been undertaken and articulates future work in the area of Drug Policy in Vancouver. The report recommends continuation of the Drug Policy Program and program staff positions on a permanent basis.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to report back to Council on the Drug Policy Program activities and to seek Council's approval for continuation of this program on a permanent basis.

BACKGROUND

In April of 2000 City Council approved the position of Drug Policy Coordinator in order to facilitate and support the development of a comprehensive approach to problematic drug use in Vancouver and to advocate for Provincial and Federal action to address drug problems in Vancouver.

Based on the work of the Drug Policy Program, in 2001 City Council adopted the Framework for Action: A Four Pillars Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver. A major premise of the strategy is that to be successful in developing a sustained and comprehensive approach to problem drug use in society a considerable investment by all levels of government is necessary as well as sustained political leadership to keep the issue high on the public agenda.

In 2003 Council approved continued funding for the Drug Policy Program and the Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment (changed to the Four Pillars Coalition in 2003). The past three years have seen incremental and significant movement towards the full

implementation of the Four Pillars strategy. Initiatives by the Drug Policy Program and Vancouver Agreement partners have put in place the foundations for the development of a comprehensive approach to problematic drug use in Vancouver.

The Drug Policy Program works within this context to provide leadership on the Four Pillars Strategy at the municipal level, to provide support for community initiatives at the local level and to work towards continued dialogue and action at the local level and within senior levels of government in responding to problem drug use in the city.

DISCUSSION

Drug Policy Program and Four Pillars developments 2003 - 2006

The Drug Policy Program works in partnership with the community and partners in other government agencies to move towards the full implementation of a comprehensive and robust approach to the issue of problematic drug use in Vancouver. While there is much work to be done there has been significant movement toward this goal in the past three years.

Prevention Pillar: Building Capacity for Prevention

The Drug Policy Program initiated a major focus on the Prevention Pillar beginning with a Prevention Symposium in November of 2003 at the Wosk Centre for Dialogue. The City in partnership with Health Canada, Vancouver Coastal Health, Centre for Addiction Research of BC, the Vancouver Agreement, the Provincial Ministry of Health and the Mayor's Four Pillars Coalition held a Prevention symposium in which over 150 participants representing diverse organizations, as well as international and local experts on prevention convened over two days to engage in a dialogue on problematic substance use. The symposium laid the groundwork for a series of community dialogues that took place in 2004.

In spring of 2004 the Drug Policy Program, in partnership with Simon Fraser Centre for Dialogue Studies, began a series of 50 dialogue sessions with local communities on the topic of prevention of problematic substance use with the purpose of inviting public input to shape a prevention plan for Vancouver. Twenty of these dialogues, designed in collaboration with the City's Youth Outreach Team, were with youth communities.

In June 2005 the draft plan "Preventing Harm from Psychoactive Substance Use" was presented to City Council. Council referred it to a public review process.

In November 2005, City Council approved the final version of the plan. Staff are initiating work on several of the 27 recommendations including:

- Development and implementation of a syringe management system in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and community agencies
- The establishment of a Prevention Task Force through the Four Pillars Coalition
- Implementation of the School Aged Prevention Project led by Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver School Board in partnership with the City and the Vancouver Police Department.
- Development of a public education program on harmful drug use in partnership with the Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Centre for Addiction Research.

- Exploring the feasibility of developing a Four Pillars Job Training and Supported Employment in partnership with Vancouver Agreement partners.
- Participation in the Methamphetamine Response Committee MARC
- Initiation of an Annual Four Pillars Prevention Summit that will invite local community serving organizations, prevention service providers, research organizations and others to raise awareness about Prevention and to determine key directions for prevention in Vancouver.
- The development of a youth engagement strategy for prevention in Vancouver in partnership with the Vancouver Agreement and the City's youth outreach team.
- Supporting the recommendations in the Homeless Action Plan

The Drug Policy Program also conducted a Prevention Mapping exercise in 2005 in order to gain insight into what was taking place in the field. The results of this study indicated that the condition of the Prevention field in Vancouver is poor. While prevention workers remain committed to early prevention efforts to ward off later drug use problems there has been a lack of coordination of initiatives, little sustained activity in this area, inconsistent messages regarding substance use, unreliable funding, low emphasis on evaluation and training of staff, and the perception in the field that prevention is little understood by the public. Those interviewed supported the City's role in highlighting the need for a true Four Pillar response that saw a strong focus on Prevention. Prevention will be a significant focus for the Four Pillars program in the future.

The Drug Policy Program also works with other City departments engaged in delivering services to the community that focus on some aspect of the Four Pillars approach. These include social planning initiatives, land use discussions on the placement and locating of health services for those with addictions, environmental initiatives to clean the environment of inappropriately discarded needles and other drug paraphernalia and educational initiatives that aim to develop prevention programming in the schools. In addition the Drug Policy Program works on areas of the Four Pillars that are outside of the City's jurisdiction and raises policy and programmatic issues with our partners in the community and within government.

Treatment and Harm Reduction Pillars

In determining key directions for addiction services in Vancouver the Drug Policy Program works closely with Vancouver Coastal Health. In the past three years there has been a significant expansion and reorganization of services in the addictions system. Some of the developments that have taken place within the areas of Treatment and Harm Reduction include:

- Initiation of a new Daytox Program - a medically monitored day program for detox
- Initiation of a Home Detox Program
- Decentralization of needle exchange across Vancouver
- Establishing core addiction services throughout the city - needle exchange, methadone, Alcohol and Drug counselling, home detox support and prevention services within all community health centres.
- Opening of the Supervised Injection Site
- Establishing the Methamphetamine Response Committee and a strategy to address methamphetamine use in Vancouver
- Creating the Access 1 phone line for withdrawal management referrals (detox).

- Expansion of youth treatment beds from 17 to 27 (14 detox, 5 support recovery, 8 residential treatment)
- Creating of D-Talks, a centralized youth access line to withdrawal management services

Other initiatives that Vancouver Coastal Health is taking the lead on that are scheduled to be implemented in 2006 and 2007 include:

- The establishment of a Long Term Residential Treatment Centre for youth that has a six to nine month duration.
- Creation of an Urgent Response Team - designed for referral and retention of mental health and addiction clients
- Onsite - increased access to the addictions system for marginalized population - focus on those seeking referrals from the Supervised Injection Site
- Establishment of a Community Transitional Care Team - facilitating completion of medical care for injection drug users leaving hospital
- Creation of a Youth Daytox Program
- Expansion of Access 1 to include access to Addictions Housing and short term residential services

Spending by Vancouver Coastal Health on addictions in Vancouver increased by approximately \$10 million between 2002-03 (\$16.2) and 2005-05 (\$26.5). Currently the bulk of funding is targeted to increasing treatment capacity (\$19.5 million) Harm Reduction (\$5 million) and Prevention and Health Promotion (\$2 million).

The Enforcement Pillar

The Drug Policy Program works with enforcement staff in the licensing department, Vancouver Police and provincial and federal staff in developing responses to prevent and reduce harm from drug and alcohol use in Vancouver.

The Vancouver Police Department in partnership with City departments, provincial and federal agencies has implemented several significant initiatives over the past three years in order to strengthen the Enforcement Pillar of the Four Pillars Drug Strategy. In spring of 2003 the VPD created the City Wide Enforcement Team with a primary focus on dismantling the open drug scene in the DTES. Other initiatives include:

- Developing police protocols for working with the Supervised Injection Site Pilot Project.
- Maintaining a focus on problem premises
- Implementing Project Lucille (focus on the underground economy in the DTES)
- Implementing Project Raven (City wide focus problem premises dealing in stolen goods)

In 2004 District 2 experienced a 7% reduction in property crime. The City as a whole experienced a 2% reduction.

In 2005 the VPD sustained the activities of the City Wide Enforcement Team and initiated a range of new projects focusing on reducing the infrastructure of the drug trade. These included:

- Initiation of the Rapid Action Response Team - targeting property crime offenders in District 2
- Implementation of Project Haven (targeting corrupt businesses in the DTES)
- Implementation of Project Turrets (undercover drug operation targeting foreign nationals and key locations in the DTES)
- Initiating Commercial Drive projects (targeting the open air drug scene in the Commercial Drive area and street disorder issues)

In 2005 District 2 experienced a reduction of property crime of 15%. The City as a whole experienced a reduction of property crime of 11%

2006

- Increasing drug enforcement on highly visible public drug use with a primary focus on parks, playgrounds, school yards, and areas immediately adjacent to residences and businesses
- Project Haven Phase 2 - focusing on 50 hotels and rooming houses in Vancouver.

Provincial and Federal Developments

The Drug Policy work that the City has engaged in over the past 6 years has taken place within the context of an evolving provincial and federal approach to addressing problematic drug use.

At the Provincial level there has been a significant amount of work undertaken to reorganize the areas of addictions and HIV/AIDS services that has seen responsibility for these areas devolved to the regional health authorities. The Province has also developed substantial addictions policy reports as guiding documents for regional health authorities. The City's four pillars strategy has had a significant influence on the direction that the Province is taking with regard to problematic drug use in British Columbia. These policy documents include:

- Every Door is the Right Door: A British Columbia Planning Framework to Address Problematic Substance Use and Addiction
- Harm Reduction: A British Columbia Community Guide
- A Provincial Crystal Methamphetamine Strategy

The Provincial Government is currently implementing a methamphetamine strategy and the City is represented on the school education and the public education committees within this strategy.

At the Federal level the previous government committed to funding a National Drug Strategy and the City, through the Drug Policy Program participated in the development of the National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada. This framework sets the direction for work at the national level. The process of developing this framework is being led by Health Canada and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. The work that is occurring at both the Provincial and Federal levels very much reflects the substance of the City's Four Pillars drug strategy and municipal involvement in these processes has been key to developing an approach that works at the local level.

NEXT STEPS

The Drug Policy Program continues to provide leadership, expertise and capacity to engage multiple city processes that include issues related to problematic drug use, the drug trade or the development of health care or housing interventions to address problem drug use or dependency. In addition to supporting and participating in the ongoing work with our partners in health and enforcement staff will be initiating work in several key areas that staff believe must be addressed in order to maintain progress to date in addressing drug problems in Vancouver. These are outlined below.

Implementation of the Prevention Plan

The City's Prevention Plan lays out a broad strategy for reducing and prevention harm from psychoactive substance use in the city. While many recommendations within this plan fall outside of the City's jurisdiction there are significant leadership, mobilization, and advocacy actions that the City can move forward on.

Youth Engagement in Prevention

Staff are working on two projects focusing on strengthening youth engagement in prevention initiatives. Through the Vancouver Agreement staff are developing a youth engagement model for prevention initiatives in Vancouver. In partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement and the City's Youth Outreach Team, the Drug Policy Program is working with a youth engagement coordinator funded by the Vancouver Agreement to develop a model of youth engagement in prevention of problematic drug use. Research indicates that youth engagement is a critical element in achieving positive prevention outcomes.

Staff are also supporting and participating in the School Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention project that is being led by the Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Coastal Health. This project will initiate prevention activities in two pilot schools in Vancouver, focus on several areas including school environment, school policy, students in grades seven through nine and parents. The project is considered a pilot project that will expand to more school sites in the coming years and to a broader age range of students.

Syringe Management Plan

Staff are working in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and the City's Engineering Department to implement a more robust plan to recover syringes from the public realm. The management plan will include an increase in the number of syringe disposal locations throughout the downtown core, a social marketing campaign encouraging users to properly dispose of their syringes and improved coordination of pick up of dirty syringes. Implementation of phase one of this plan will proceed over the next 2 months.

Public Education

Staff are working with the Centre for Addiction Research, The Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver Coastal Health to develop a public education program focusing on harm from substance use. The program will be delivered through the Vancouver Public Library system.

The Four Pillars Coalition

The Four Pillars Coalition (formerly the Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment) was created by former Mayor Philip Owen, supported by former Mayor Larry Campbell and is comprised of 60 plus organizations that have supported the goals of the Four Pillars drug strategy and have been active in advocating for increased government and community support across all pillars of the strategy. The Coalition is an excellent vehicle for moving forward the issue of prevention within the Four Pillars strategy. Prevention is by definition a broad concept and there are a wide range of opportunities for Coalition members to contribute to building capacity for prevention in Vancouver in the coming years. Staff will be working with Coalition members to develop a prevention focus within the Coalition.

Prevention Summit and Prevention Task Force

One of the key recommendations of the Prevention plan is the initiation of an annual prevention summit that would involve stakeholders in prevention coming together to build momentum and capacity for improving prevention in Vancouver. The Summit will bring together a diverse cross section from the Vancouver community including prevention service providers, the business community, faith communities, research organizations, drug users, funders and all levels of government to articulate key areas prevention areas to develop. The Prevention Task Force will be an important vehicle for raising the awareness of the need for prevention and contributing to building a prevention movement in Vancouver.

Four Pillars Job Literacy and Supported Employment Project

Drug Policy staff, in partnership with the Vancouver Agreement and the Hastings Institute are exploring the feasibility of developing a job training project for individuals in recovery from substance use.

An Enhanced Drug Treatment Continuum

Considerable work has been undertaken to create a comprehensive continuum of drug treatment services. More can be done. Significant gaps need to be addressed in the near future. Specific areas include: mental health and addiction (concurrent disorders), supportive housing, services for women and parents with children, aboriginal services, expansion of low threshold approaches such as the supervised injection site and day treatment centres outside of the downtown eastside. The City works closely with Vancouver Coastal Health and the community in determining priorities in this area.

Modernizing Legislative, Regulatory and Policy Frameworks

The City has shown leadership in acknowledging the limitations that exist when attempting to prevent and reduce harm from substances that are currently illegal. These substances are beyond the reach of our ability to control and regulate any aspect of their production or sale. While the development of alternative schemes for the regulation and control of currently illegal substances is a complex and long term undertaking there is a growing momentum to move in this direction. Recently the Medical Health Officers' Council of British Columbia has advocated for a public health approach to drugs in the recently released paper: A Public Health Approach to Drug Control in Canada. At the international level there is also a growing movement to re-examine the efficiency of the current framework of prohibition. The goal in

moving forward towards an alternative to prohibition is to create a system that meets the following objectives:

- Achieve reductions in crime and public disorder;
- Improvement of the public health;
- Better protection of children and youth; and
- Wiser use of scarce public resources.

The prevention and reduction of harm from currently illegal drugs is an ongoing issue for Canadian municipalities and new approaches to this issue must be considered in light of the limitations that clearly exist with simple prohibition of substances that are in high demand. Staff work at the local, national and international level in working towards alternative legal frameworks for regulating psychoactive substances.

Drug Substitution and Maintenance Programs

The issue of drug substitution and maintenance programs have been the subject of some discussion in the past few years. Staff are currently putting together information on substitution programs internationally with a view to their application within the Vancouver context.

The most common substitution programs for addiction related problems are the nicotine patch for tobacco users and methadone prescription for the treatment of heroin addiction. These interventions have demonstrated significant positive outcomes in preventing harm from the use of tobacco and illegal street heroin both of which are toxic and addictive substances.

Other approaches to drug maintenance and substitution programs that show particular promise for addressing problems in Vancouver also need further exploration. These include: consideration of heroin assisted treatment programs, introduction of Buprenorphine for the treatment of heroin use, stimulant maintenance using amphetamines for cocaine, crack and methamphetamine users.

Heroin Assisted Treatment: Currently the North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI) is conducting clinical research in this area. Internationally research has indicated that heroin assisted treatment is effective for certain populations of opiate users and has been sanctioned by the government of Switzerland and the Netherlands as an important part of the drug treatment continuum. A next step for this kind of intervention would be to implement a broader program of treatment using heroin assisted treatment.

Buprenorphine: The use of Buprenorphine has recently been approved by Health Canada for use in Canada by physicians to treat heroin users. Buprenorphine is used in a similar fashion to that of methadone as a replacement substance. Buprenorphine blocks drug cravings, reduces withdrawal symptoms and blocks the effects of subsequent drug use. This product is seen as a complement to the methadone program and may work well for those who do not find methadone to be effective. The product has been recently approved for use in Canada but as yet has not made it to market.

Stimulant Maintenance and Substitution: The problematic use of stimulants in Vancouver contributes to a significant amount of harm to individuals and communities. Drug related crime related to the use of stimulants such as methamphetamine, cocaine and crack cocaine

is also of significant concern to the city. There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that there is good reason to explore pilot projects that use stimulant replacement therapy for severe cocaine users and methamphetamine users. This strategy could show a number of positive outcomes including: reduced illegal drug use, use of pharmaceutical grade drugs instead of more toxic street drugs, changes towards safer routes of administration (from injecting to oral) and increased contact with treatment programs.

Alcohol replacement: Research conducted in Ottawa focusing on substituting extremely harmful substances such as shaving lotion, Lysol and highly salted cooking wines used by long term and entrenched alcohol users with ordinary red wine has shown significant positive results in reducing harm and improving the health status of homeless individuals who are heavy consumers of non-beverage alcohol and inexpensive and highly potent alcohol products. Results of the Ottawa research showed significant reductions in attendance at emergency rooms among participants and a significant drop in the number of police contacts as well in a reduction of alcohol consumption.

Strategies to provide substances such as amphetamines and alcohol to heavy users have the goal of reducing harm, stabilizing individuals, improving health status and decreasing contact with the police and the criminal justice system.

Monitoring, Research and Networking

The Drug Policy Program also responds to numerous requests from Vancouver citizens, students and individuals from around the world on a weekly basis for information on drug policy and problematic drug use issues. Staff participate in a range of monitoring and evaluation projects such as the Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU), the Vancouver Injection Drug User Survey (VIDUS), the North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI) advisory committee, the Provincial Methamphetamine Strategy Public Education steering committee, the Vancouver Youth Drug Use Survey being implemented by Vancouver Coastal Health and participate in regional and national processes focusing on responses to problematic drug use in the community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Currently the Drug Policy Program is comprised of three temporary full time staff positions: Drug Policy Coordinator, Social Planner 1 and a Clerk III. The program has an annual budget of \$90,000 for program costs including, communications, materials development, publications, support for the Four Pillars Coalition, public events such as the Prevention Summit, research and consultants. The Program has been funded on a three year cycle since inception in April of 2000. This report recommends continuation of the Drug Policy Program and making it permanent.

At this time \$100,000 is allocated to the Drug Policy Program in 2006 for the period January 1 to April 30. The Annual cost to the City of this program will be \$320,000 (\$220,000 for 8 months of 2006 for the period May 1 to December 31).

Drug Policy Program

Salary Costs: Including Fringe Benefits

Drug Policy Coordinator	\$106,000
Social Planner 1	\$ 76,000
Clerk III	\$ 48,000
Program Costs	\$ 90,000
Total Program Costs	\$320,000

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

This report recommends making the current temporary full time positions of Drug Policy Coordinator, Social Planner 1 and Clerk III position into regular full time positions subject to review and classification by Human Resources.

CONCLUSION

The City of Vancouver Drug Policy Program is an important component of the City's ability to undertake the development of evidence based policies that will assist in the prevention and reduction of drug related harm in Vancouver. Given the magnitude of the addiction issues in Vancouver and the long term approaches necessary to address these issues, it is recommended that the Drug Policy Program be made a permanent component of the partnership with local health and enforcement agencies to address problematic drug use in Vancouver.

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