

4. Endorse the Vienna Declaration

MOVER: Councillor Kerry Jang

SECONDER: Councillor Ellen Woodsworth

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver has provided municipal leadership by endorsing a comprehensive and evidence-based strategy to reduce harm from the sale and use of illegal drugs and is committed to work with all levels of government to implement the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement;
2. It is important to distinguish between harms that result from drug use and harms that are consequences of policy, specifically the enforcement of prohibition;
3. The current policy of drug prohibition has failed to reduce drug production, availability and use with illegal drug prices falling and purity increasing as monitored by international drug surveillance systems;
4. There is no evidence that increasing law enforcement reduces the prevalence of drug use;
5. The number of countries where people inject illegal drugs is increasing;
6. Injecting illegal substances is the leading cause for approximately one in three new cases of HIV;
7. An illicit drug market worth an estimated value of US\$320 billion in the hands of criminals fuels violence, deaths and destabilizes entire nations;
8. The “War on Drugs” approach has been a waste of billions of tax dollars and has in fact resulted in consequences that are the very opposite of its stated aims and has spawned more harm to public health;
9. The Vienna Declaration was spearheaded by the scientific community, and in particular, the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, in the wake of the XVIII International AIDS conference in Vienna to call for an acknowledgement of the harms of drug prohibition and for drug policy reform to remove barriers to effective HIV prevention, treatment and care.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council continue to support an urban health approach based on science to address safety and harms to community and individuals by formally endorsing the Vienna Declaration, writing to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Union of BC Municipalities, and Provincial and Federal Ministers in the Justice and Health departments to inform them of our endorsement, as well as urging the Mayor to put this issue on the agenda of the next meeting of the Big City Mayors Caucus.

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