

## UB3. Four Pillars Drug Strategy Review and Additional Resources

At the reconvened Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on October 24, 2019, due to time constraints, the Committee referred discussion and decision of the above-noted item to the Regular Council meeting on November 5, 2019, as Unfinished Business.

MOVED by: Councillor De Genova

### WHEREAS

1. The Four Pillars Drug Strategy was introduced at Vancouver City Council in the 1990s by former City of Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen;
2. In 1998, Council approved “A Program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside” which included developing directions for the City to address substance misuse issues in the Downtown Eastside and the city;
3. Based on policy and research gathered from exploring models in European cities (Frankfurt, Geneva, Zurich) in the United Kingdom (Liverpool), Australia (Sydney) and U.S.A. (Portland, Oregon) on April 24, 2001, Council officially adopted a revised framework and policy recommendations “A Framework for action: A Four Pillar Approach to Vancouver’s Drug Problems”;
4. The Four Pillars Drug Strategy includes:
  - Harm Reduction
  - Prevention
  - Treatment
  - Enforcement
5. Vancouver is world renowned for implementation of the Four Pillars Strategy and exploring new clinical trials, programs and approaches to address drug policy. Listed below are examples:
  - i) InSite opened September 21, 2003, in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and is the first supervised injection facility in North America. InSite is managed by Vancouver Coastal Health and over the years it has proved to be successful in several ways including reducing overdose fatalities, reducing the transmission of blood-borne infections like HIV and Hepatitis C, increasing referral and connections with community and health programs;
  - ii) The North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI) Study was approved by Health Canada and funded by Canadian Institutes of health research. A Vancouver clinical trial began with enrollment of 192 volunteers in 2005 and enrollment concluded in 2007. The objective of this clinical trial was to test if heroin-assisted therapy benefits people suffering from chronic opiate addictions who have not benefited from other treatments. Clinical Trials were also conducted in Montreal and Quebec City;

- iii) The Study to Assess Longer-term Opioid Medication Effectiveness (SALOME) enrolled 202 volunteers for a clinical trial study beginning in 2011 with study completion in 2016. SALOME endeavored to compare two medications- diacetylmorphine (active ingredient in heroin) and hydromorphone;
- 6. The City of Vancouver and Mayor and Council over several terms and of different political affiliations have supported the Four Pillars Drug Strategy, updating actions in the strategy to address current and emerging community needs;
- 7. Overdose Prevention Sites and Drug Checking Services have expanded in Vancouver, providing clients at Insite and individuals using the Overdose Prevention Society Site and others the ability to test drugs for fentanyl and other substances. A Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) media release in 2017 announced 4 locations and the Powell Street Getaway, offering a Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectrometer (FTIR), which can identify multiple ingredients in drugs;
- 8. April 14, 2016 the overdose crisis was declared a public health emergency in British Columbia and in the province over 3,600 people have lost their lives because of overdose;
- 9. December 20, 2018, a Special Council meeting was held for “Mayor’s Overdose Emergency Task Force –Recommendations for Immediate Action on the Overdose Crisis”. The following language carried in a Council amendment:
 

*THAT Council direct staff to explore how all pillars of the Four Pillars Drug Strategy have been applied to the overdose crisis since the Provincial Medical Health Officer declared a public health emergency under the Public Health Act on April 14, 2016, and report back in Q3 of 2019;*
- 10. In July 2019, Council approved a safe supply statement and recommended resolution for FCM to “call on the federal government to expand access to safe supply by proactively supporting all doctors, health authorities, provinces and all relevant professional colleges, including physicians and surgeons across Canada, to safely provide regulated opioids or other substances through a free and federally available Pharmacare program.” In September 2019, a resolution passed at FCM in support of initiatives to support and fast-track safe supply for municipalities;
- 11. Portugal has adopted an innovative model setting their system apart, including decriminalization of illicit drugs for users found carrying personal supply (for up to 10 days). The system has similar objectives to the Four Pillars Drug Strategy. Like restorative justice, the “Commission for the Dissuasion of Drug Addiction” offers a different approach to enforcement. There is also access to a long-term safe supply for chronic opioid users, who can be connected to ongoing treatment and community support. The Portugal model is measured by data and success- including a significant reduction in overdose related deaths, the cost of incarceration, healthcare and property crime;

12. Although the City of Vancouver has expressed the need for increased treatment options, access to treatment is limited and waitlists can be ineffective and long for people facing addiction.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT, in the interest of moving forward with a comprehensive review and the ongoing of the Four Pillars Drug Strategy, Council direct staff to increase resources and the capacity of city staff to research drug policy.

FURTHER THAT the City manager administer and organize staff and resources, to increase the capacity of Arts, Culture and Community Services to research a new drug policy to further achieve the goals of the Four Pillars Drug Strategy.

AND FURTHER THAT that this be implemented as soon as possible and no later than the 2021 City of Vancouver operating budget cycle.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to investigate and report back on the possibility of implementing “new to Vancouver initiatives”, that have proven to be successful in drug policy strategy approved by federal parliament in Portugal.

FURTHER THAT any recommendations that may be brought forward, are in the spirit of The Four Pillars Drug Strategy and the Healthy City Strategy.

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