

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

4. Work with Senior Governments to Address the Overdose Crisis

Submitted by: Mayor Stewart

WHEREAS

1. The overdose crisis continues to claim many lives, with 1,536 deaths in Vancouver since a Provincial Overdose Emergency was declared in April 2016, and an estimated 328 overdose deaths in the City of Vancouver this year to date, putting 2020 on track to be the worst year yet;
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has further isolated drug users, impacted access to harm reduction services, and fueled greater toxicity within the illicit drug supply;
3. Premier Horgan wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau on July 20, 2020, asking the federal government to decriminalize personal possession of all psychoactive substances, as a necessary next step to reduce the stigma associated with substance use and encourage people at risk to access lifesaving harm reduction and treatment services;
4. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police agree that decriminalization of simple possession is an effective way to reduce public health and public safety harms associated with substance use and endorses alternatives to criminal sanctions for simple possession of illicit drugs;
5. Vancouver Coastal Health's (VCH) Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Patricia Daly and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry have called for the decriminalization of personal possession of illegal substances, as an urgent and necessary next step to addressing the overdose crisis;
6. The PIVOT Legal Society, Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, and Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network recently wrote to the Federal Ministers of Health, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and Justice and Attorney General to urge their government to use all available tools to decriminalize simple drug possession;
7. Decriminalization is a step toward addressing anti-Black, anti-poor, and colonial policing at this time; and
8. Vancouver is in a unique position to move forward with decriminalization within its municipal borders, in a coordinated partnership with the Vancouver Police Department and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct the Mayor to consult with the VCH Chief Medical Health Officer and then write to the federal Ministers of Health, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and Justice and Attorney General to request a federal exemption from the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to decriminalize personal possession of illicit substances within the City's boundaries for medical purposes, in order to address urgent public health concerns caused by the overdose crisis and COVID-19;

FURTHER THAT the Mayor write to all other B.C. local governments urging them to consider pursuing a federal exemption from the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to decriminalize personal possession of illicit substances within their municipal boundaries;

AND FURTHER THAT the Mayor write to the Union of BC Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities seeking their support for decriminalizing personal possession of illicit substances.

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