



9 East Hastings | Vancouver, BC V6A 1M9

November 19, 2020

Mayor Kennedy Stewart
3rd Floor, City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Mayor Stewart,

RE: Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs

At yesterday's Annual General Meeting of PHS Community Services Society the membership voted unanimously to support your proposed plan to decriminalize personal possession of drugs in Vancouver. It is my pleasure to convey that decision to you.

It has been our belief since our founding that drug addiction is a health issue and not a criminal matter. The exemption you are seeking under Section 56 of the Federal Controlled Drugs and Substance Act is the self-same exemption we were granted enabling PHS to open InSite, North America's first legal supervised injection site in 2003. It was one piece of a broader plan of harm reduction that has saved thousands of lives.

As you may recall, a few years later the federal Conservative government of Stephen Harper attempted to withdraw that exemption which was fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada; in 2010, the Supreme Court turned down Ottawa's appeal and came down with a ruling that allowed our work at InSite to continue.

Your proposal would put the city in good company. What was a radical notion two short decades ago is now accepted as a well-founded approach and widely supported by the medical and political

establishment. Two years ago, the Vancouver Health Authority Chief Medical Health Officer, Dr. Patricia Daily, recommended the decriminalization of substances as part of a broader plan of harm reduction. B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, is on board and so is the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

We wish you every success in this project and look forward to the day when we are able to go one step further and provide enough drug users a safe supply of drugs to significantly mitigate the drug overdose crisis we now face.

Yours

Allen Garr
Chair, PHS Community Services Society Board of Directors.

CC: City of Vancouver councillors:
Councillor Bligh
Councillor Boyle
Councillor Carr
Councillor De Genova
Councillor Dominato
Councillor Fry
Councillor Hardwick
Councillor Kirby-Yung
Councillor Swanson
Councillor Wiebe,
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health