



The Corporation of the District of Saanich | Mayor's Office

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Sent via email

February 2, 2021

Mayors and Councils of British Columbia

Dear Mayors and Councils,

Re: Actions to Address the Overdose Crisis

I would like to draw to your attention that on January 25, 2021 Saanich Council considered a Report to Council on the overdose crisis and resolved as follows:

"That Council:

- Direct staff to engage in discussions with local health agencies and non-profit organizations addressing the overdose crisis to discuss whether Saanich could support safe consumption sites and to explore further potential actions Saanich/local governments could take to help, and to report back to Council with options;*
- request the Government of Canada to declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency;*
- reaffirm its earlier requests to senior governments on the overdose crisis and further request that the Government of Canada immediately seek input from the people most affected by the crisis and meet with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive Pan-Canadian overdose action plan, which includes comprehensive supports and full consideration of reforms that other countries have used to significantly reduce drug-related fatalities and stigma, such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs, and decriminalization for personal use;*
- publicly voice its support to decriminalize simple drug possession; and*
- share the report with all other municipal Councils in the Province of British Columbia, and write to all other municipal Councils in the Capital Region, and the Capital Regional District Board, requesting that they take similar action."*

A copy of the [report dated January 11](#) and an excerpt of the [January 25 meeting minutes](#) are attached for further information.

These requests build upon the advocacy work presented by our resolutions indicated in the [council report](#) presented on September 14, 2020. [Here](#) you can find the recent reply received from the Director General, Controlled Substances Directorate of Health Canada on January 28.

Today we see lives continuing to be lost in record-breaking numbers due to the overdose crisis. British Columbia has suffered a record breaking year for lost lives due to a toxic illicit drug supply. New approaches and additional actions are needed to address this crisis.

We hope that together our continued advocacy will aid in bringing the needed resources forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Haynes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fred Haynes
Mayor

Enclosures

cc: Saanich Council
Paul Thorkelsson, District of Saanich, CAO



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Notice of Motion

To: Mayor and Council
From: Councillor Ned Taylor, Councillor Karen Harper
Date: January 11, 2021
Subject: Actions to Address the Overdose Crisis

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council direct staff to engage in discussions with local health agencies and non-profit organizations addressing the overdose crisis to discuss whether Saanich could support safe consumption sites and explore further potential actions Saanich/local governments could take to help, and to report back to council with options.
2. That Council request the Government of Canada to declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency.
3. That Council reaffirm its earlier requests to senior governments on the overdose crisis and further request that the Government of Canada immediately seek input from the people most affected by the crisis and meet with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive pan-Canadian overdose action plan, which includes comprehensive supports and full consideration of reforms that other countries have used to significantly reduce drug-related fatalities and stigma, such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs, and decriminalization for personal use.
4. That Council publicly voice its support for the Vancouver's efforts to decriminalize simple drug possession.
5. That Council share this report with all other municipal councils in the Province of British Columbia, and write to all other municipal councils in the Capital Region, and the Capital Regional District Board, requesting that they take similar action.

BACKGROUND

On September 14, 2020, Saanich Council passed a motion advocating to senior levels of government for actions to address the overdose crisis. The motion read as follows:

"That Council write to the Offices of the Prime Minister, the Premier, and the Federal and Provincial Ministers of Finance, Health, Mental Health and Addictions and Municipal Affairs and Housing, requesting they commit to providing adequate funding, new policy frameworks and legislative changes to effectively and holistically address the opioid crisis, mental health issues and their connections to homelessness in the municipalities in British Columbia and Canada

and this approach include the decriminalization of controlled substances for personal use and the provision of a safe supply of opioids."

Lives continue to be lost at record-breaking numbers due to the overdose crisis. Therefore, it is critical that Saanich Council continues to advocate to senior levels of government for actions needed to address this crisis, and explore potential actions that we could take as a municipality to help.

On Dec 21, 2020, the BC Coroner Services reported that "There have been 1,548 illicit drug deaths to date in 2020 in B.C., and the number of deaths in each health authority is at or near the highest ever monthly totals." Furthermore, the BC Coroner Services reports "153 suspected drug toxicity deaths in November 2020, an 89% increase over November 2019 (81)". BC's Chief Coroner, Lisa Lapointe, stated "Tragically, as we reach the end of 2020, our province is facing a record-breaking year for lives lost due to a toxic illicit drug supply." The Chief Coroner also speaks to the significant impacts that COVID-19 has had for those experiencing problematic substance use. She states specifically that "Ensuring access to critical harm reduction measures including naloxone, supervised consumption sites, overdose prevention sites and drug checking services are essential if we want to prevent future deaths." This full press release from the BC Coroner Services is attached to this report as Appendix A.

The recommendations in this report are actions that Saanich can take to address the overdose crisis, along with additional advocacy initiatives. These recommendations were developed with input and feedback from numerous experts and non-profit organizations in the Capital Region that are currently addressing the overdose crisis.

Safe consumption sites

Safe consumption sites are an effective measure to reduce overdoses and other harms associated with substance use.

The Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR) Co/Lab Team recently released a bulletin (attached as Appendix B) for the purpose of sharing evidence supporting critical substance use services and supports, including treatment and harm reduction programs that meet the needs of people who use drugs. They find that "Supervised consumption sites are being implemented across Canada as one public health measure to reduce the harms associated with substance use, including overdoses and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C (HCV). However, politically motivated attacks on supervised consumption sites have made it difficult for some policy makers and service providers to support this evidence-based public health intervention." Further, they find that "A wealth of evidence suggests that supervised consumption sites do reduce overdoses and other substance use harms, connect people with other health services, and reduce unsafe drug use practices."

It is clear, based on the evidence available, that safe consumption sites are an effective way to reduce overdoses and other harms associated with substance use. Through land use, the District of Saanich could potentially play a supporting role in implementing safe consumption sites as one measure to address the overdose crisis. Recommendation #1 in this report seeks to engage in discussions with local health agencies and non-profit organizations, who are addressing the overdose crisis, to explore whether Saanich could help support new safe consumption sites, and whether there are any other ways that Saanich and local governments can help address the overdose crisis.

Further advocacy

Saanich Council, as noted earlier in this report, has advocated to senior levels of government on actions to address the overdose crisis. It is important to continue this advocacy to senior levels of government, considering the urgency of this crisis.

Recommendations #2 and #3 have been originally developed by Moms Stop The Harm (MSTH), which is a network of Canadian families impacted by substance-use related harms and deaths. MSTH advocates for changes to failed drug policies and also provides peer support to grieving families and those with loved ones who use or have used substances. In November, MSTH wrote to municipalities and asked them to pass a resolution (similar to recommendations #2 and #3 of this report). Their letter, and original resolution, is attached to this report as Appendices C and D.

The City of Vancouver

In November, 2020, Vancouver City Council unanimously voted in favour of a motion, which seeks to decriminalize small amounts of illegal drugs (See Appendix E). In September, 2020, Saanich Council publicly requested senior levels of government to decriminalize controlled substances to address the overdose crisis.

It is important to continue to build support for these much needed initiatives. Recommendation #4 in this report seeks to publicly express support for the City of Vancouver's efforts to decriminalize small amounts of illegal drugs.

Other municipalities

We know that when we stand together with other municipalities and regional districts, our voice and our requests to senior levels of government can be strengthened. Recommendation #6 of this report seeks to share this report and its recommendations with all other local governments in British Columbia, and to directly request that the CRD Board and municipalities within the CRD take similar action.

CONCLUSION

The overdose crisis continues to be an urgent crisis affecting people throughout the South Island, British Columbia, and Canada. In fact, well over 1,500 people have died in BC in 2020 as a result, a number that is substantially higher than deaths due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

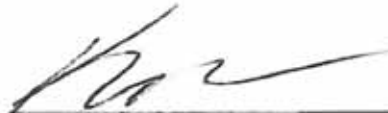
It is clear that new approaches and additional actions are needed to adequately address this crisis. The recommendations in this report are actions that Saanich can take to help, and have been developed in consultation with numerous non-profit organizations directly addressing the crisis, and experts with specific knowledge on these matters.

We ask that Council support the recommendations in this report, and continue to look for ways that we can help. This is a serious crisis that needs action now.

Respectfully submitted by:



Ned Taylor
Councillor



Karen Harper
Councillor

Attachments

Appendix A: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/news/2020/illicit-drug_news_release.pdf

Appendix B:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb1a664ccf4c7037e8c1d72/t/5f629f75f778751e69eba58f/1600298872589/Bulletin_Safe+Consumption+Sites.pdf

Appendix C: MSTH Letter

Appendix D: MSTH Resolution

Appendix E: <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/drug-decriminalization-unanimously-endorsed-by-vancouver-city-council-1.5205625>

J. Soule, Victoria area

Actions to Address the Overdose Crisis

- There is a public health crisis; safe injection sites have the potential to save lives and could offer mental health services and social supports.
- Safe injection sites protect the community from unsafe drug usage.

J. Mahoney, Hartland Avenue

Actions to Address the Overdose Crisis

- Safe injection sites are necessary and are a vital part of harm reduction and recovery; over 50% of overdoses occur in private residences.
- It is a matter of saving lives.

C. Antrobus, Cordova Bay Road

Actions to Address the Overdose Crisis

- The overdose crisis is a provincial problem; safe injection sites saves lives.

1410-01
Council
Proceedings

The Manager, Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk advised that public input as presented by a memo dated January 25, 2021 noted all correspondence received before noon on January 25, 2021 and forms part of the public record.

MOVED by Councillor Taylor and Seconded by Councillor Harper: "That Council receive for information the correspondence for the Special Council meeting of January 25, 2021 addressing:

- **Actions to Address the Overdose Crisis; and**
- **86 Crease Avenue – Rezoning and Development Variance Permit Application."**

CARRIED

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

2170-50
Overdose Crisis

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE OVERDOSE CRISIS

Report of Councillor Taylor and Councillor Harper dated January 11, 2021.

MOVED by Councillor Taylor and Seconded by Councillor Harper: "That Council:

- 1. Direct staff to engage in discussions with local health agencies and non-profit organizations addressing the overdose crisis to discuss whether Saanich could support safe consumption sites and to explore further potential actions Saanich/local governments could take to help, and to report back to Council with options;**
- 2. Request the Government of Canada declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency;**
- 3. Reaffirm its earlier requests to senior governments on the overdose crisis and further request that the Government of Canada immediately seek input from the people most affected by the crisis and meet with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive Pan-Canadian overdose action plan, which includes comprehensive supports and full consideration of reforms that other countries have used to significantly reduce drug-related fatalities and stigma, such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs, and decriminalization for personal use;**

4. Publicly voice its support for the City of Vancouver's efforts to decriminalize simple drug possession; and
5. Share the report with all other municipal Councils in the Province of British Columbia, and write to all other municipal Councils in the Capital Region, and the Capital Regional District Board, requesting that they take similar action."

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- More advocacy to senior levels of government to address the overdose crisis is needed.
- People from all walks of life are dying from overdoses on a daily basis.
- Safe consumption sites are an effective way to reduce overdoses and save lives.
- All levels of government should consider decriminalization of drugs for personal use; public safety and public health authorities are calling for decriminalization.
- We are in two public health emergencies – the Pandemic and the Opioid Crisis.
- There are economic benefits through fewer hospital and first responder costs, fewer economic losses due to lost time at work and lower costs to the court and prison systems.
- Saanich has a role to play in advocating and communicating to the community.
- Island Health Authority has advised that they are interested in having discussions with Saanich with respect to mitigating harm.
- It may be appropriate to forward the motion to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) as a late resolution.
- The report builds upon the earlier work of Council.

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Plant: "That the motion be amended that point #4 read: "publicly voice its support to decriminalize simple drug possession"."

The Amendment was then Put and CARRIED

The Main Motion, as Amended, was then Put and CARRIED

The Main Motion, as Amended:

"That Council:

1. Direct staff to engage in discussions with local health agencies and non-profit organizations addressing the overdose crisis to discuss whether Saanich could support safe consumption sites and to explore further potential actions Saanich/local governments could take to help, and to report back to Council with options;
2. Request the Government of Canada declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency;
3. Reaffirm its earlier requests to senior governments on the overdose crisis and further request that the Government of Canada immediately seek input from the people most affected by the crisis and meet with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive Pan-Canadian overdose action plan, which includes comprehensive supports and full consideration of reforms that other countries have used to significantly

- reduce drug-related fatalities and stigma, such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs, and decriminalization for personal use;
4. Publicly voice its support to decriminalize simple drug possession; and
 5. Share the report with all other municipal Councils in the Province of British Columbia, and write to all other municipal Councils in the Capital Region, and the Capital Regional District Board, requesting that they take similar action."

REPORTS FROM DIRECTORS

2870-30

Crease Avenue

86 CREASE AVENUE – REZONING AND DEVELOPMENT VARIANCE PERMIT APPLICATION

Supplemental report of the Director of Planning dated January 7, 2021. To rezone from the RS-6 (Single Family Dwelling) Zone to a site specific zone to permit two single family dwellings on one lot.

The Director of Planning noted that there is a typographical error on page 5 of the report under Option 1 and Option 2; the covenant to secure the size of the new building and its footprint has not been captured.

The Director of Engineering stated:

- Servicing requirements for items such as road widening for curb and gutter and drainage improvements, stormwater connection and onsite stormwater requirement are typical for rezoning applications.

In response to questions from Council, the Director of Planning stated:

- Garden suites were not permitted when the original application was submitted; the proposal is outside the scope of the Garden Suite regulations therefore a site specific zone is recommended.
- Staff are collecting comments with respect to the Garden Suite regulations and will report back to Council after one year.
- Setting precedence is not an issue as each application is considered on its own merits.
- The house on Lot A could have a gross floor area of up to 1905.1 square feet.

In response to questions from Council, the Director of Engineering stated:

- A stormwater connection is the only engineering servicing requirement for a Garden Suite.
- If Council wished to consider Option 2 at a Public Hearing, a Development Variance Permit to include variances for the total number of parking spaces, servicing levels for development, road improvements and onsite stormwater retention and treatment would be prepared.
- The cost estimates for the servicing requirements are unknown.

MOVED by Councillor Harper and Seconded by Councillor Chambers:
"That a Public Hearing be called to further consider the rezoning application and the additional engineering variances as outlined in Option 2 in the supplemental report of the Director of Planning and the Director of Engineering dated January 2, 2021 on Lot 8, Block 7, Section 24, Victoria District, Plan 877 (86 Crease Avenue)."