



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of Jan. 23rd, 2020

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** Jan. 16, 2020
From: Councillor Loveday and Councillor Potts
Subject: Support for Universal Health Coverage for Prescription Contraception in British Columbia

BACKGROUND

Cost remains a significant barrier to people accessing contraception. An intrauterine device (IUD) can cost between \$75 and \$380, oral contraceptive pills can cost \$20 per month, and hormone injections can cost as much as \$180 per year. Such costs represent a significant barrier, particularly to people with low incomes, youth, and people from marginalized communities.

While there are a small number of programs in place to support access to contraception (such as Fair PharmaCare), these programs are largely income-dependent. No one should have to pass a means test or face financial burdens in order to freely exercise their right to make choices about their reproductive health. Cumbersome application processes and paperwork further discourage the use of these programs.

In addition, while young adults may be covered through their parent's plans (because a parent is almost always the primary subscriber for health insurance), young people are often forced to give up their privacy in order to make choices about their bodies. This issue is a matter of equity. Vasectomies, a permanent method of contraception, are already covered by the province, and free condoms are easy to come by. No BC resident should be forced to pay more to exercise their rights simply because they happen to have a uterus.

Providing free prescription contraception is also good health policy - it has been shown to improve health outcomes for parents and infants by reducing the risks associated with unintended pregnancy, particularly among adolescents, and will maximize the health benefits and outcomes of preparing for planned pregnancy.

Many other countries already subsidize prescription contraception, in full or in part, including the UK, France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany. These countries have done so because the personal, public health, and social benefits far outweigh the costs.

It's time for all prescription contraception in BC to be free.

Recommendation:

That Council endorse the following resolution for consideration at the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities convention and forward the resolution to the Minister of Health and local Members of the Legislative Assembly:

**PROVIDE UNIVERSAL NO-COST COVERAGE OF
PRESCRIPTION CONTRACEPTION****City of Victoria**

WHEREAS cost is a significant barrier to people accessing contraception, particularly to people with low incomes, youth, and people from marginalized communities;

AND WHEREAS providing free prescription contraception has been shown to improve health outcomes for parents and infants by reducing the risks associated with unintended pregnancy, and is likely to reduce direct medical costs on the provincial health system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities call on the Provincial Government to make all prescription contraception in BC available at no cost under the Medical Services Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Loveday



Councillor Potts