



## Council Member Memo

For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 27, 2017

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** July 24, 2017  
**From:** Councillor Alto  
**Subject:** Update on the Supervised Consumption Services Partners' Project

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The Supervised Consumption Services Partners' Project began in early 2016 with voices from the Yes2SCS Coalition, Island Health and the City of Victoria. Partners now meet with the Oversight Committee for Services for Vulnerable Populations in Victoria, which includes AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI), Cool Aid Society, PHS Community Services (PHS), Our Place Society, Society of Living Illicit Drug Users (SOLID) and several Island Health departments.

On the matter of temporary supervised consumption services, four Overdose Prevention Service locations opened in Victoria between December 2016 and February 2017, providing overdose prevention monitoring and intervention, peer supports, harm reduction supplies and linkages with other services. There have been more than 25,000 visits as of June 2017.

On the progress of permanent services, two applications for an exemption to current laws prohibiting such services have been submitted to Health Canada.

### *1. 941 Pandora Street Public Supervised Consumption Service Centre*

This centre anticipates a 10-booth integrated, publically accessible supervised consumption service (SCS). This application was submitted in early January 2017.

On site construction has begun on what is expected to be about an eight-month building renovation. Responses to a Request for Proposals (RFP) for building were favourable. Concern about inflated or few bids due to the rapid construction boom were unfounded.

An RFP for a service provider is scheduled to be issued in September, as Island Health is required to do under its Fair Business Policies. Staffing at 941 Pandora Street will be a blend of Island Health and contracted community service staff (including paramedics). This partnership will provide balanced accountability for service delivery and operation to governments, community and clients.

Once open in 2018, annual operational investment will be in excess of \$1.2 million, in addition to the \$1.8 million committed to capital improvements to the building.

Following receipt of the initial application for 941 Pandora Street, Health Canada requested additional information around policies and procedures, security processes and how unidentified

and/or left-behind substances would be handled. That information was provided to Health Canada earlier in June.

While new federal legislation (Bill 37) has streamlined some requirements for approval of an exemption application, the application process still requires complex design, data collection and operational information. Health Canada has not yet approved this application for exemption, but all indications are that the application is receiving favourable reviews and could be approved pending a site visit. Once approval is received, the building will open as soon as renovations are complete.

## *2. 844 Johnson Street Residential Supervised Consumption Service*

This service anticipates a 4-booth supervised consumption service embedded within low-barrier housing for residents and registered guests. An application for an exemption to current laws for a limited service open to residents of this housing facility was submitted early June. Health Canada has acknowledged receipt of the application. No further feedback or questions have been received from them.

### **On Related Matters**

At the start of this Partnership, the focus was primarily on supervised consumption services. Work has evolved to consider a broader response to addictions crises, to include a range of services that span the service continuum based on key principles of Early Intervention, Prevention, Harm Reduction, Treatment and Recovery.

As a result, in addition to the temporary overdose prevention sites and progress on achieving federal exemptions to provide permanent supervised consumption services, there has been enhancement of a number of related complementary services.

- An Island Health funded team including staff from Aids Vancouver Island (AVI), Society of Living Illicit Drug users (SOLID), and the Portland Hotel Society (PHS) is doing outreach, Naloxone training, and public engagement. While funding for that team concludes at the end of August, Island Health is already exploring ways to maintain that funding and review ways the demographic of men who use alone can be more effectively reached.
- There has been a substantial increase in the number of physicians able to prescribe suboxone (through training delivered in partnership with Divisions of Family Practices and the Centre for Substance Use). A total of about 30 providers are now eligible to prescribe suboxone in Greater Victoria. Suboxone is playing a key and expanding role in treatment, including the opening of a Rapid Access Addiction Clinic (RAAC) at the Cook/Pembroke back in February. That clinic has had success starting people on Suboxone and then transferring clients (once stabilized) to other primary care programs.
- A new Addictions Medicine Consultation Service has been added for inpatients at Royal Jubilee Hospital, Victoria General Hospital and Saanich Peninsula Hospital. This enables physicians to call in/consult with an addiction medicine specialist for patients who have been admitted and need this service.

- Additional withdrawal/detox services are available through:
  - Detox (Eric Martin): Medical supervision of high risk withdrawals (e.g. alcohol) and assessment and individual treatment planning with the aim to support continued recovery. Short-term stay (~ 10 days). 21 beds; admission by referral through Centralized Intake.
  - Stabilization (Eric Martin): After detox, stabilization supports continued recovery through assessments, addictions counselling, care planning and links/reintegration to community services. Five beds added in 2015 for a total of 22 beds with stays between 7 and 30 days.
  - Sobering and Assessment Centre (Pembroke): Up to 24 hour stay for people influenced by drugs/alcohol. Provides shelter, physical risk assessment, laundry, showers, snacks and referrals to other services (20 spaces plus 5 more during cold weather protocol).

The Partners' Project will continue to work collaboratively to push for additional addictions response and complementary health services, including supervised consumption services, offered in community-based, peer-informed models

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Marianne Alto