Agenda – Council – February 24, 2022

Executive Policy Committee – Notice of Motion

Item No. 1 Request for an Exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

Moved by Councillor Rollins,
Seconded by Councillor Chambers,

WHEREAS criminalization makes it difficult for people who use drugs to access harm reduction services, increasing risks and subjecting them to even more health harms (such as injury, and disease), and/or social harms (such as joblessness, and homelessness);

AND WHEREAS many Canadian researchers have suggested racial bias within police investigations, and prosecutions of drug crimes resulting in Black and Indigenous people dramatically over-represented in drug possession arrests and convictions as a result;

AND WHEREAS people who use drugs, including peers and self-advocates who use drugs, Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, Mom's Stop the Harm, are encouraging Winnipeg to move away from a criminal justice and/or abstinence approaches towards a public heath approach with community-based organizations and the health and social services sector;

AND WHEREAS Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto and Edmonton are already calling on the federal government to decriminalize small amounts of illegal drugs to take on the drug poisoning crises and prevent further deaths;

AND WHEREAS The provincial government is responsible for funding and coordinating primary health care including mental health and addictions supports and services; and

AND WHEREAS All levels of government have a role to play in improving public health outcomes for residents including actively championing harm reduction methods, housing-first, safe consumption sites, safe supply, and other measures which can help save lives;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) request the Federal Government for an exemption for Winnipeg under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, to allow the possession of small amounts of illegal substances within the city's boundaries.

Executive Policy Committee – Notice of Motion (continued):

2. The CAO make all reasonable efforts with the federal government to set up a process as stated above to allow the possession of small amounts of illegal substances within the city's boundaries under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, and from the first formal confirmation from the federal government that they are committed to working with the City on a process toward the issuance of the aforementioned exemption, begin quarterly reporting to the appropriate Committee of Council with verbal updates on the continuous work and milestones until decriminalization is achieved within Winnipeg with the support of the Federal Government.

3. The Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.