Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Via E-MAIL to:
lcowans@gmail.com

The Winnipeg City Council
510 Main St.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 139

Dear Councillors:

Re: Executive Policy Committee Agenda Item No. 10: Decriminalization for Simple Possession of Illicit Drugs

I am a resident of the River Heights – Fort Garry Ward in Winnipeg, and I write to you today as an enthusiastic supporter of this resolution. It has long been clear that the war on drugs has not stopped or slowed drug use. Instead, it has merely become a war on drug users. Criminalization has failed to decrease drug use, as shown in data from the Government of Manitoba, and has only succeeded in arresting, incarcerating, and otherwise harming people with substance use issues. Illegal drug use is not unique to any ward in Winnipeg, it is ubiquitous. These drug users are not a far away problem, they are our relatives, neighbours, and friends. They are also your constituents.

Nearly every country in the world struggles with drug use to different degrees. The ones which have seen the most success in addressing this issue are the ones with a harm reduction approach, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Canadian approaches such as Insite in BC have also shown success in certain metrics.

I want to keep this letter brief, so I will conclude with the following additional points:

1) The types of trauma that typically lead to addiction are complex, and cannot be addressed by policing;
2) Harm reduction is a more economically efficient approach to drug issues than criminalization; and
3) Overdose rates have skyrocketed during the pandemic, our current approach is clearly not working to protect Winnipeggers.

For these reasons, and many many more, I strongly support the resolution, and full decriminalization of drugs with an emphasis on harm reduction.

Yours Very Truly,

Silas Koulack