West Central Women's Resource Centre

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Treaty 1 territory, Original Lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, & Dene peoples & Homeland of the Métis Nation

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Re: City Motion – Decriminalization

West Central Women's Resource Centre (WCWRC) is supportive of the City of Winnipeg motion to recognize a four-pillar approach to harm reduction, as well as the adoption of the Indigenous Harm Reduction Policy brief.

WCWRC's mission is to empower women and their community to move from where they are to where they want to be, by providing responsive programming, facilitating knowledge sharing and connection, and contributing to culture shift and policy transformation.

We recognize that current drug law and drug policy adversely impacts BIPOC populations as being overly represented in possession charges, arrests, and convictions. In particular, women, Two-Spirit and non-binary people, and those who experience multiple intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination, such has folks who are houseless, face unique and additional vulnerability to various forms of violence at the hand of harmful systems; all this also leads to more family separations and intergenerational trauma.

The failed war on drugs has caused great harm to people who use drugs (PWUD), and continues to funnel PWUD into the justice system rather than the healthcare system, despite problematic substance use being a health issue. It has wasted resources and tax dollars on policing, court costs and corrections, when these funds could be used to strengthen harm reduction and public health initiatives, mental health services, community programming, and housing initiatives; all which are evidence-based interventions that support relatives that have problematic substance use or substance dependence.

WCWRC joins many in asking City Council to explore a city-wide exemption for possession, as a step in the right direction toward moving drug policy out of a criminalized sphere and into the realm of health and social services. This shift would remove many of the barriers associated with creating a variety of evidence-based measures that are desperately needed to address the toxic drug supply epidemic that is ravaging our city; some of these solutions are also outlined in the CAPC Report, namely safe consumption services and safe supply. This crisis is felt deeply and daily in our community, and resulted in 407 overdose/ drug poisoning deaths in the province of Manitoba in 2021. It is time to end the stigma and to avoid further preventable deaths.

We support this initiative and are committed to working closely with the city to ensure that the community consultations will follow, include, and prioritize the expertise of people who use drugs. Further, we continue to ask our municipal and provincial leadership to work with the community to collaborate on evidence-based solutions together.

Sincerely,



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