

# Raise your property values!

## Support Harm Reduction Services

Drug addiction and drug abuse are a concern for many residents and property owners in the Downtown Eastside and Strathcona areas. Drugs are often related to violence, property crime, HIV, Hep C, littered needles, prostitution and other social ills. There are many social myths surrounding this problem which affects us all.

**Myth:** Drug use in a neighbourhood lowers property values.

**Fact:** Prohibited drug use in a neighbourhood lowers property values. If the Downtown Eastside allowed addicts access to safe fixing sites, illegal drugs on prescription and appropriate social services and medical care the “drug problem” would be largely removed from the streets. Addicts would be served indoors by these harm reduction services and greatly reduce their visibility in the community. This would raise property values!

**Myth:** Drugs cause crime

**Fact:** Drug prohibition causes crime. Prohibition creates a black market which raises the price of drugs to enrich the dealers. The black market drives crime in Vancouver.

**Myth:** Drugs cause violence.

**Fact:** Drug prohibition causes violence. Dealers kill police, police kill dealers, dealers kill each other. This violence is a direct function of the black market which does not have access to the courts for legal ways of resolving conflict.

**Myth:** Littered needles are a result of drug abuse.

**Fact:** Littered needles are a result of lack of appropriate services. In Europe where illegal drugs are available on prescription, and safe fixing sites are open, drug users fix in controlled facilities and dispose of needles safely.

**Myth:** Providing services to addicts in the Downtown Eastside attracts new addicts to the community.

**Fact:** They are already here. The process of prohibition creates a black market which is very good at distributing illegal drugs. This easy availability of drugs in our community attracts users.

**Myth:** More police will solve the problem

**Fact:** The USA has aggressively jailed drug addicts for many years and now has the most incarcerated population on the planet. This combative approach has failed repeatedly. The street value of heroin and cocaine has dropped throughout the “war on drug users” and these drugs are now easily available throughout the country.

**Myth:** Harm reduction services (like safe fixing sites) attract youth to drugs.

**Fact:** Harm reduction services are “boring” to youth. Harm reduction services like safe fixing sites have been available in Europe for many years. Over time the average age of the users of safe fixing sites has gone up due to the fact that these services do not attract young new users.

**Myth:** Harm reduction services (like safe fixing sites and illegal drugs on prescription) is giving in to the drug problem.

**Fact:** Harm reduction services are the most effective way of engaging this marginalised population and helping them to lead more functional lives. As addicts become reintegrated into society through the harm reduction process they commit fewer crimes and property values go up.

**Myth:** Harm reduction services are in opposition to abstinence based services.

**Fact:** As addicts connect with harm reduction services they become reinfranchised members of society which increase the likelihood of abstinence. Many individuals progress from harm reduction services to abstinence based services.

**Myth:** Providing illegal drugs on prescription and safe fixing sites increases drug consumption.

**Fact:** Drug consumption is driven by many factors including isolation, poverty, desperation and despair. Harm reduction services reduce the factors which drive addiction and as a result drug use decreases. This has been demonstrated in many European countries.

**Myth:** Criminalization of drug use is effective at reducing drug use.

**Fact:** Criminalization is not a factor in whether an individual chooses to use drugs. The Netherlands where marijuana is legally available has about half the consumption of the USA which has very punitive policies.

**Myth:** Methadone is the only useful substitute for illegal drugs.

**Fact:** Methadone is not attractive to many intravenous heroin and cocaine users. Having heroin and cocaine available on prescription as well as methadone would increase public health options for addicts. The Swiss study which offered IV heroin to addicts found that heroin had some advantages over methadone as it was better at attraction, retention, and compliance. Heroin also is less addictive than methadone and has fewer physical side effects.

**Myth:** Heroin kills people.

**Fact:** Prohibition kills people. Heroin is a relatively benign drug. Prohibition creates a black market which produces impure drugs of unknown dosage which are taken in unsafe settings with unclean needles.

**Myth:** Harm reduction services are just enabling drug users.

**Fact:** Enabling means to help. Harm reduction services help addicts to live more functional lives. As they live more functional lives less crime is committed and property values increase.

**Myth:** We don't spend enough money on the police services.

**Fact:** Canada spends four dollars on enforcement for every one dollar it spends on treatment and prevention of addiction.

**Myth:** Addiction is best seen a criminal justice problem.

**Fact:** Public Health approaches are more effective at reducing drug related problems than police interventions.

Harm reduction services like safe fixing sites and having illegal drugs available on prescription can significantly reduce the problems a community faces with drug abuse. The problem will not go away but it can be managed more effectively and reduce the highly visible dealing and use which lower property values. **Harm reduction services can actually raise property values!**