



For Immediate Release

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GREEN PARTY RELEASES HARM REDUCTION AND DRUG POLICY

Vancouver –Green Party candidates Ann Livingston and Bev Ballantyne released the Green Party's position on harm reduction and drug policy today before the Police Board meeting.

Vancouver is faced with a major social and health crisis. Our current government refuses to follow the example of other nations, such as The Netherlands, England and Germany, which have stopped treating the drug crisis as a criminal problem. Since the beginning of prohibition the criminal justice system has been proven to be a wasteful and ineffective control mechanism for drug abuse. Our current enforcement strategy does not deter drug use and enables a dangerous black market. The criminalization of drug users forces those in need away from the little support that presently exists for them, and forces users into a life of crime, leading Vancouver to have property crime rates double that of other major Canadian cities. Fundamental changes in policy are required to reduce crime, disease and deaths.

An effective strategy must be comprehensive, modeled on initiatives already proven to be effective in others cities. Therefore a Green Party City Council will:

- 1- Recognize drug use as a social and health issue.
- 2-Promote an approach to Vancouver's drug problem based on common sense, good research, sound public health policy and human rights.
- 3-Support easily accessible methadone and drug treatment.
- 4-Establish safe injection sites in order to immediately reduce public drug use, overdose deaths and the spread of disease.
- 5-Provide cost effective street level initiatives that empower drug users and draw them into employment opportunities.
- 6-Immediately open 100 treatment beds in Vancouver at a cost of \$2 million and put additional pressure on the provincial and federal governments to take responsibility to fund these essential services.
- 7-Launch a court challenge to show that senior governments can be held accountable to follow sound public policy when failing to do so causes the continued preventable deaths of hundreds of people.
- 8-Initiate a policy of tolerance towards drug possession and small scale trafficking in order to allow police to focus on real crime.
- 9-Allow small-scale home based marijuana grow operations.

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