



CLOSED REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: **Fraser Health Authority, Langley Health
Contract Services to Operate an Overdose
Prevention Site**

File #: 1101.00

Doc #: 176731

From: Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: March 16, 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT City Council write to the Minister of Health and the Fraser Health Authority (FHA) to convey the City's position with respect to the proposed Langley Health Contract Services provider to operate an Overdose Prevention Site in either the City of Langley or the Township of Langley:
 - a. THAT should the qualified service provider select a location within the municipal boundary of the City of Langley for the Langley Health Contract Services (Overdose Prevention Site), the Ministry of Health and FHA require the qualified service provider to meet the following conditions and requirements:
 - i. A potential OPS shall be located within the land use designation Service Commercial bounded by the Langley Bypass, 200th Street and Fraser Highway, as illustrated in Schedule "A";
 - ii. A formal rezoning process is required for the proposed service since no existing zones permit the use;
 - iii. All additional services shall be provided inside the facility (i.e. food security programs, public washrooms access, computer/phone access, others); and
 - iv. Security and site cleanup around the facility shall be provided 7 days per week 24 hours per day.
 - v. The service provider shall develop a good neighbour committee.
2. THAT City Council authorize public release of the report of the Chief Administrative Officer dated March 16, 2021 at the next Regular Council Meeting.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from City Council to convey the City's position with respect to Fraser Health Authority's (FHA) plan to award a contract for a Health Contact Services provider to operate an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) in either the City or the Township of Langley.

POLICY:

Not applicable.

COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

Background

At the February 22, 2021 Regular Council Meeting, the Fraser Health Authority (FHA) made a presentation to Council regarding its plan to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Health Contact Services provider (i.e. a non-profit society or organization) to operate an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) in either the City or the Township of Langley. OPSs were established through [Ministerial Order No. M488](#) issued by the Minister of Health in December 2016 as a community-based response to overdose deaths and as an alternative to the lengthy process to approve Supervised Consumption Service (SCS) applications.

FHA's documents reference that OPSs are spaces where people are provided a safe setting to use their previously obtained substances under the supervision of someone trained to recognize and respond to an overdose. This enables a rapid response to an overdose, which prevents brain injury and death. OPSs allow drug users access to health services across the continuum of public health and mental health services, including witnessed consumption. Prior to the Ministerial Order, sites were often unsanctioned pop-up sites.

OPSs are lower barrier than SCSs and can be more responsive to the needs of an individual community. OPSs fill a critical gap in the spectrum of services for people who use substances. In essence, OPSs are SCSs without being exempted by Health Canada under section 56.1 of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) where people can use their own illicit drugs under the supervision of trained professionals without being prosecuted for drug possession. These sites help reduce the transmission of disease, reduce fatal overdoses, and help connect people to health care services, including treatment. Setting up an SCS is often an intensive process involving approval from various jurisdictions through a lengthy application. SCSs and OPSs offer a wide range of complementary health services including:

- Distribution of supplies for safer injection;
- Education on safe injection technique and infection prevention;
- Overdose prevention and intervention;
- Medical and counselling services;
- Referrals to substance use treatment;
- Connection to housing and other support services; and
- Drug-checking.

OPSS operate differently than Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) sites¹. OAT is for people addicted to opioid drugs such as fentanyl and heroin. The treatment involves taking a daily medication like Methadone, Suboxone, or Kadian to prevent withdrawal and stabilize individuals. Medications are prescribed in a structured, supervised clinical setting and combined with other types of support such as:

- Counselling;
- Long-term substance use monitoring, such as regular assessment and urine drug tests;
- Harm reduction practices and education, such as Take-Home Naloxone kits;
- Referrals to case management, relapse prevention supports, and specialist care; and
- Comprehensive preventive and primary care, such as yearly check-ups, screenings, and immunizations.

Within the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region, PHS Community Services Society provides support and direct service for two Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside – the Maple Overdose Prevention Site (Maple OPS) and the Molson Overdose Prevention Site (Molson OPS) – along with Insite Safe Injection Site and Victoria's Johnson Street Supervised Consumption Site. They operate analogously as lifeguard stations for drug consumption, providing a welcoming and culturally safe environment, harm reduction supplies, and a clean environment for witnessed safer drug consumption. Maple OPS is run by PHS staff and peers (community members with lived experience in drug consumption and dependence) who are trained to recognize and reverse overdose and to provide support and resources to participants. PHS provides a robust alley overdose response with Spikes on Bikes in the area until midnight and a foot patrol deployed from the Maple OPS from midnight until 7:00 am daily. Both provide clean supplies and check on people in the alleys, responding to overdoses.

¹ An OAT clinic has been operating at a unit located at 20300 Fraser Highway since December 2018.

There are currently several OPSs within the FHA region, including two (2) in Abbotsford, one (1) in Maple Ridge, and four (4) in Surrey.

FHA's Request for Proposal Process

Service Provider: The service provider who will operate the OPS will either be selected through the RFP process or a direct award, depending on availability and interested agencies. FHA will inform local community agencies who may be interested and have the skills to provide the type of service requested.

OPS Location: The location for the OPS will be dependent on the location selected by the service provider and the site they propose to work from. There is only funding available for one OPS in either the City or the Township of Langley.

Loitering and Safety Concerns: As part of the RFP process, all proponents are required to provide a neighbourhood risk mitigation plan to enhance safety and address any concerns that may arise.

Consultation with the Community and Neighbouring Properties: FHA expects the service provider to engage in community consultation with key stakeholders, including the RCMP.

Other Support Services at the OPS: As part of the RFP process, all proponents are required to identify what other value-added services they can provide on site and the mechanism to ensure strong linkages to other community programs for support and referral (i.e. mental health, substance use services, home health, etc.).

Analysis

It is recognized that there is a drug overdose crisis in British Columbia, and overdose prevention services are an integral component of supporting people who use drugs as they provide access to health services across the continuum of public health and mental health services, including witnessed consumption.

Langley City is a very compassionate community with many faith-based and non-profit organizations offering essential support and services to the vulnerable population in our community. Langley City is also home to many government and social service agencies who support the same vulnerable population, including people with drug addiction and mental health issues. While these services are much needed in the community and there is no intention to stigmatize the vulnerable population, there is a real social impact to the community and to those properties and businesses located adjacent to these services. The City regularly receives complaints from businesses

related to litter and excrement being left behind, people refusing to leave when the business opens, and vandalism.

The 2019 Community Survey reveals concerning perceptions and attitudes on the quality of life, important community issues, and community safety.

Quality of Life

- 32% of respondents said quality of life worsened in the last 5 years
- Reasons that quality of life worsened:
 - Increased poverty and homelessness (40% of respondents)
 - Increased crime/drug activity (20% of respondents)

Important Community Issues

- 49% of respondents cited social issues (45% mentioned poverty and homelessness)
- 29% of respondents cited crime

Community Safety

- 53% of respondents said the community was less secure than 5 years ago

As the City is only 10 square kilometres in size, most of our community, especially the downtown core, will experience some level of impact, perception or otherwise by having an OPS. Langley City has a vibrant and thriving downtown despite the ongoing challenges of homelessness, mental health issues and drug addiction faced by some members of our community. As our downtown is a significant economic and tourism driver, we do not want our downtown to be battered by effects of crime, social problems, and uncleanliness that may force businesses to close down. As compassionate as our community is, there is a real concern that we will not be able to cope with potential activities and elements with having an OPS in the City.

We recognize that these are complex and complicated issues and there is no 'one size fits all' approach with treating people with drug addiction. There should be other options to consider first, such as:

- The OPS and OAT should be located at a hospital where other support services are offered. There should be consideration to locate these services at the new hospital being built in Cloverdale, and in the interim to offer these services temporarily at Langley Memorial Hospital.

- Provide a mobile unit to service clients at their homes rather than establishing a facility in the community. This would alleviate concerns of impaired driving, as well as reducing community impacts. As there are high incidences of overdoses taking place in private residences, a mobile service would assist in reaching this population.

If the qualified service provider selects a location within the municipal boundary of the City of Langley for the Langley Health Contract Services (Overdose Prevention Site), it is recommended that the Ministry of Health and FHA requires the qualified service provider to meet the following conditions and requirements:

- a. A potential OPS shall be located within the land use designation Service Commercial bounded by the Langley Bypass, 200th Street and Fraser Highway, as illustrated in Schedule "A";
- b. A formal rezoning process is required for the proposed service since no existing zones permit the use;
- c. All additional services shall be provided inside the facility (i.e. food security programs, public washrooms access, computer/phone access, others); and
- d. Security and site cleanup around the facility shall be provided 7 days per week 24 hours per day.
- e. The service provider shall develop a good neighbour committee.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

City resources (e.g. street cleanup, bylaw enforcement, fire rescue services, police services) may be incurred if an Overdose Prevention Site is located in the City.

ALTERNATIVES:

There are several alternatives for Council consideration:

1. THAT the City advise the Ministry of Health and the Fraser Health Authority that the City does not support a Health Contract Services provider to operate an Overdose Prevention Site within the City of Langley.
2. THAT the City does not object to a Health Contact Services provider to operate an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) in either the City or the Township of Langley.

To: Mayor and Councillors

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Respectfully Submitted,



Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

1. Schedule "A" – Potential OPS Area
2. FHA's Request for Proposal for Langley Health Contract Services to operate an Overdose Prevention Site