

Four Pillar Approach Motion Backgrounder

Notice of Motion - Four Pillar Approach

That Council send a letter to the provincial and federal governments which: Reiterates that the ongoing impacts on communities of the addiction, mental health, toxic drug and homelessness crisis is unacceptable. That these senior levels of government must fully engage in a comprehensive four pillar approach of Harm Reduction, Prevention, Treatment, and Enforcement to tackle the illicit drug poisoning, mental health and addictions crisis in our community and communities across BC. That senior levels of government work towards effective long-term solutions that integrate the principles of these four pillars in a unified strategy.

The letter should outline the following:

That council understands that the Harm Reduction pillar is an important aspect of tackling the drug crisis because it keeps people alive, reduces transmittable disease, and saves healthcare costs by reducing emergency department visits. This approach needs to be accompanied by access to health care and social service providers at overdose prevention sites. A Housing First approach is needed to ensure that people with mental health and addiction challenges who are experiencing homelessness are provided with appropriate supportive housing as part of the harm reduction strategy. A harm reduction strategy without a concerted focus on the other three pillars only prolongs the misery that people afflicted with mental health, addiction and homelessness face daily and does not alleviate or properly address the chaos and disruptions for communities affected by the crisis.

That the Prevention pillar includes addressing the social determinants of health and underlying risk factors and education about the lethal nature of the toxic drug supply, and the harmful effects of addictive drugs including alcohol. Prevention must also include the incorporation of free mental health services under the Canada Health Act to be provided through provincial health services to ensure that people experiencing mental health challenges can receive the services they need to reduce the compulsion to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol.

That the Treatment pillar needs to be vastly expanded so that people with substance use disorders who are voluntarily seeking treatment are able to receive treatment upon request. That people who have received treatment and who are experiencing homelessness are provided with appropriate supportive dry housing to reduce continuing cycles of harm. That people who are unable to care for themselves or make informed decisions for themselves are taken into care to protect themselves from additional harm. This pillar must also include access to opioid agonist therapy to divert people with substance use disorders from using toxic street drugs.

That the Enforcement pillar needs to strengthen penalties for high-level drug producers and traffickers of highly addictive illegal substances and toxic drugs. And that low level drug traffickers and people engaged in crimes of survival who are also affected by substance use disorders are directed towards treatment and restorative justice programs.

Background Information on the Four Pillar Approach.

The Four Pillar approach to addiction is a comprehensive drug strategy that integrates public health and public order perspectives, focusing on Harm Reduction, Prevention, Treatment, and Enforcement

- Harm Reduction: This pillar focuses on reducing the negative consequences associated with substance use, rather than the use itself. This includes strategies such as providing clean needle exchange programs and distributing naloxone (Narcan) to reverse opioid overdoses.
- Prevention: The prevention pillar includes strategies and interventions that help to prevent or delay the onset of harmful substance use in the first place, often by addressing underlying social determinants of health, reducing risk factors, and enhancing protective factors through education and community initiatives.
- Treatment: This pillar encompasses a range of interventions and support programs, from counseling and peer-based support to medical interventions like methadone maintenance, to help individuals manage their addiction and work toward recovery. The goal is to improve overall health, social integration, and quality of life.
- Enforcement: This pillar recognizes the need for public order and safety and involves law enforcement and justice systems working to disrupt the illegal drug market and address drug-related crime. It also includes partnerships with social and health services to provide pathways to support for individuals whose addiction has led to criminal activities.
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<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/four-pillars-drug-strategy.aspx>

<https://www.bag.admin.ch/en/the-four-pillar-policy>

<https://www.bundesdrogenbeauftragter.de/en/themen/national-strategy-on-drug-and-addiction-policy/>