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**MEMORANDUM**

**PHD-C 9-2020**

**Subject: Referral of Motion – Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs**

**Date: October 13, 2020**

**To: Public Health and Social Services Committee**

**From: Ann-Marie Norio, Regional Clerk**

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At its meeting held on September 17, 2020, Regional Council passed the following motion:

That the motion respecting Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs **BE REFERRED** to the Public Health and Social Services Committee.

The motion respecting Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs is noted below for Committee's consideration:

WHEREAS the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police agree that police services remain committed to combatting organized crime and disrupting the supply of harmful substances coming into our communities by targeting drug trafficking and illegal production and importation, and further agree that diversion provides new opportunities to make positive impacts in communities. These impacts may include reducing recidivism, reducing ancillary crimes and improving health and safety outcomes for individuals who use drugs;

WHEREAS laws that criminalize people simply for using and possessing drugs have resulted in serious health and social harms, including forcing people into unsafe spaces and high-risk behaviours leading to HIV and HCV infection, resulting in criminal records that make it difficult to obtain employment and housing, and reinforcing negative stereotypes and judgements about people who use drugs;

WHEREAS some groups are more impacted by our drug laws than others, including people who are homeless and/or living in poverty, people with mental health and substance use issues, people from racialized groups, Indigenous people, women, and youth;

WHEREAS a public health approach to drugs would be based on principles and strategies that have been shown to support healthy individuals, families, and communities;

WHEREAS countries that have decriminalized personal drug use and possession and invested in public health interventions have seen results, including decreases in HIV and overdose, decreases in costs to the criminal justice system, and improved police/community relationships;

WHEREAS the evidence on the health and social harms of our current criminalization approach to illegal drugs as well as that of alternative approaches such as decriminalization and legal regulation strongly support the need to shift to a public health approach to drugs in Canada;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the federal government **BE URGED** to decriminalize the possession of all drugs for personal use, and scale up prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services;
2. That the federal government **CONVENE** a task force, comprised of people who use drugs, family members, and policy, research and program experts in the areas of public health, human rights, substance use, mental health, and criminal justice, to explore options for the legal regulation of all drugs in Canada, based on a public health approach; and
3. That this motion **BE CIRCULATED** to Minister of Health Patty Hajdu, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott, Attorney General, Doug Downey, Niagara's MPs and MPPs, Niagara's 12 local area municipalities, Niagara Regional Police Service, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Ann-Marie Norio  
Regional Clerk