

Attachment 1

Letter from Fraser Health

May 16, 2025

Lisa Spitale

Chief Administrative Officer
City of New Westminster
511 Royal Avenue
New Westminster, BC V3L 1H9

Dear Ms Spitale,

Please accept this letter of support regarding the Temporary Use Permit application for the Starship Health Contact Centre at 40 Begbie Street.

Operated by Purpose Society with funding from Fraser Health, the Health Contact Centre provides essential health care services to community members who use unregulated substances.

Starship Health Contact Centre remains an important part of Fraser Health's regional toxic drug response strategy. Since the Health Contact Centre opened its doors in April 2021, trained staff have saved lives by reversing 267 toxic drug events. Additionally, staff have distributed 9,170 Take Home Naloxone kits, safely disposed of 134,409 needles and facilitated 1,194 referrals to health and social services, including mental health and substance use supports. Tragically, 282 lives have been lost to substance use in New Westminster since the toxic drug public health emergency was declared in 2016.

The ensuing years have seen significant changes to the unregulated drug supply, and to consumption patterns with more people now using substances through inhalation than injection. In 2024, inhalation was the most common mode of consumption among unregulated drug deaths in the Fraser Health region, ranging from 51% to 77% monthly. Nasal insufflation was the second most common consumption method, ranging from 3% to 26% monthly; followed by injection, ranging from 4% to 15% monthly; and oral ingestion, ranging from 2% to 14% monthly.

The current landscape presents unique challenges and opportunities with respect to service provision. Starship Health Contact Centre welcomes individuals who consume substances by injection, nasal insufflation and oral ingestion, but is unable to accommodate inhalation currently. To prevent unregulated drug deaths and related harms, staff monitor community members who inhale substances in the vicinity of the Health Contact Centre and respond to medical emergencies as needed.

In response to this service gap and to concerns raised by the City of New Westminster, Fraser Health will work with Purpose Society to wind down overdose prevention services at 40 Begbie Street and transition to an alternate overdose prevention service delivery model accommodating individuals who consume unregulated substances by inhalation, injection, nasal insufflation and oral ingestion. Of note, harm reduction supply distribution and allied harm reduction services are planned to continue at 40 Begbie Street.

Fraser Health is working closely with the Ministry of Health, the City of New Westminster and Purpose Society to identify a suitable new location for the overdose prevention service that is accessible to clients and acceptable to the broader community.

I therefore recommend approving the Temporary Use Permit for a further 18 months to allow Fraser Health and partners to wind down overdose prevention services at 40 Begbie Street and transition to an alternate overdose prevention service delivery model.

I thank the City of New Westminster for your ongoing partnership and invite you to reach out should further information be required.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "Harding".

Dr. John Harding, MB BCH BAO, MPH, CCFP, FRCPC

Public Health Physician
Toxic Drug Response and Priority Populations
Fraser Health Authority