



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# Staff Report

---

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 4900-03

**From:** Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

**Date:** May 8, 2024

**Subject:** Vancouver Island Health Authority Mobile Outreach and Overdose Prevention Services

---

**PURPOSE:** To update Council on Vancouver Island Health Authority (Island Health) mobile outreach health services, including episodic overdose prevention services, and request Council's approval to delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services to enter into any agreements with Island Health that may be required to facilitate the delivery of mobile health services on city-owned property.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Vancouver Island Health Authority (Island Health) provides a range of outreach services through its Mental Health and Substance Use teams locally. Island Health outreach teams work in communities to offer accessible services to those facing challenges related to mental health and substance use, including in encampments, supportive housing, and other community settings. The IHOST mobile outreach program meets people where they are by travelling to key locations throughout the community.

Courtenay City Council has been advocating for increased and enhanced overdose prevention services to address the toxic drug supply and overdose epidemic. On December 12, 2022, Council passed the following resolution:

*THAT the City of Courtenay request Island Health to immediately and urgently provide a temporary Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) with inhalation services in the Comox Valley;*

*AND THAT City of Courtenay staff continue to work with Island Health on the identification & facilitation of suitable location for both a temporary and permanent OPS with inhalation services.*

Since this time, City and Island Health staff have been working together to support the establishment of an inhalation overdose prevention site in Courtenay, as well as consider alternative, temporary options as interim solutions. Island Health has shared recently that it has designated the IHOST mobile outreach program as an episodic overdose prevention site which will enable it to provide overdose prevention services within its suite of health and medical services.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### *Overdose Prevention Services*

Island Health is actively working on plans to implement a temporary (three to five year) inhalation overdose prevention site in Courtenay. However, due to the severity of the toxic drug crisis which is causing significant numbers of overdoses and deaths in the community, Island Health is pursuing expansion of its mobile health services to include episodic witnessed consumption. Island Health provides diverse options for overdose prevention services to meet the needs of local communities and individuals.<sup>1</sup> These include:

---

<sup>1</sup> [Island Health broadens access for overdose prevention services in the Comox Valley | Island Health](#)

- Overdose prevention sites (OPS) which are safe spaces where teams of trained staff monitor people while they use substances;
- Episodic OPS (e-OPS) which support people in a less formal setting that complements other health or social services they are receiving. e-OPS can be made mobile and be provided through outreach to homes, shelters and other facilities by having staff and or peers available to provide on-demand, witnessed consumption. The BC Centre for Disease Control developed a Provincial Episodic Overdose Prevention Service (e-OPS) Protocol in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

The IHOST mobile outreach program travels to a diverse set of locations including supportive housing, public parking lots, encampments, and other key areas in the Comox Valley to provide health services. Through a partnership with a local peer-based organization, Island Health is looking to expand its provision of health services to include e-OPS and or episodic witnessed consumption to better meets the needs of individuals while the temporary inhalation OPS is in development.

Through recent discussions with Island Health, City staff have gained a clearer understanding of the presence of IHOST in City-owned locations, typically public parking lots including Simms Park, Share the Harvest Community Garden, and next to the Connect Centre. Through these discussions City staff have reaffirmed the City's support of the provision of overdose prevention services, as well as identified the need to work collaboratively to ensure that the delivery of health services in City-owned spaces, particularly parking lots, to ensure the safe and effective delivery of health services while maintaining appropriate pedestrian and vehicle access and traffic patterns through these public spaces.

#### *Mobile Outreach Health Services on City-Owned Land*

There are currently no agreements in place between Island Health and the City outlining the delivery of health services through the IHOST mobile outreach team on City-owned property. An agreement may be necessary to ensure that the necessary risk management protocols are in place to ensure the safety of those accessing health services as well as the general public when accessing parking lots. Such items may include addressing safety items related to vehicle and pedestrian traffic flow, congestion, and emergency access.

Additionally, should Island Health request to set up any temporary structures (i.e. a tent) to support the provision of health services alongside the IHOST mobile outreach vehicle, it is recommended that Council authorize staff to not enforce the Traffic Regulation Bylaw No. 1926, 1996 in relation to the provision of health services by the IHOST mobile outreach vehicle pending the necessary agreements are in place that outline the protocols to manage pedestrian and vehicle safety in parking lots.

#### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

OCP, 2022

Social Infrastructure

Objective 2: Coordinated, inclusionary, and systems-based responses are in place to address evolving complex social issues

- SI 8: Continue to support regional partners on program administration and delivery for homelessness, poverty prevention, mental health, addiction, and overdose prevention programs.
- SI 12: Work regionally to further recommendations of the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy Phase 1 Report (2021) including identifying an appropriate role for the City.

---

<sup>2</sup> [BCCDC COVID-19 Provincial Episodic Overdose Prevention Service Protocol \(islandhealth.ca\)](https://www.islandhealth.ca/overdose-prevention-service-protocol)

Traffic Regulation Bylaw No. 1926, 1996

- The Traffic Regulation Bylaw outlines regulations regarding vehicles and pedestrians in roadways, sidewalks, and parking lots and must be considered in review of IHOST mobile outreach service delivery in public parking lots, especially as it relates to safety, congestion, and traffic flow.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications anticipated at this time.

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

Recreation, Culture, and Community Services will lead the development of any necessary agreements and arrangements with Island Health to support the provision of mobile health and outreach services through the IHOST program on city-owned land.

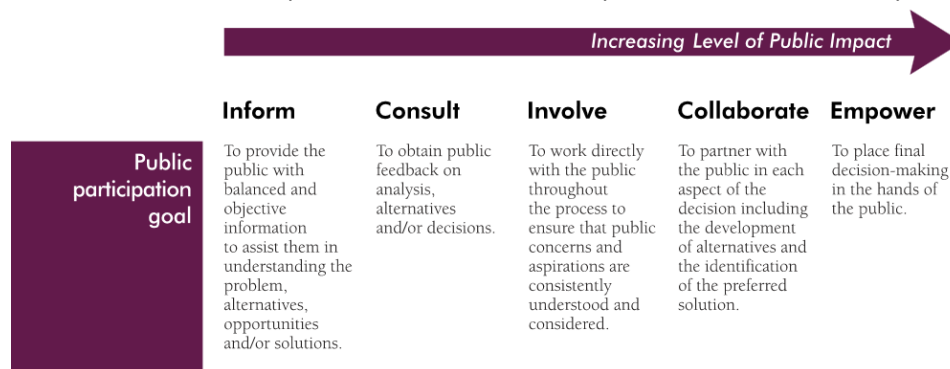
**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Social Infrastructure - Identify roles for the City in the delivery of social infrastructure outlined in the OCP; Implementation plan for delivery of social infrastructure

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



© International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)

**OPTIONS:**

1. THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services to determine the form and content of an agreement between the City of Courtenay and Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) to facilitate the continued provision of health services by Island Health's mobile outreach IHOST program on City owned land; and THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services to authorize any required agreements or other legal documents necessary to provide Island Health access and permission to use City-owned land for the purposes of providing health services through VIHA's mobile outreach IHOST program. THAT Council direct staff to not enforce the Traffic Regulation Bylaw No. 1926, 1996 as it pertains to the provision of health services by VIHA's mobile outreach IHOST program on City owned land during the term of the Agreement.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Attachment 1: Presentation from Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA)

Prepared by: Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Reviewed by: Kate O'Connell, Director of Corporate Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)