

May 26, 2020

Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
Province of BC
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Victoria, BC
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Susan Brown
President and CEO
Interior Health
505 Doyle Avenue
Kelowna, BC, V1Y 0C5

Minister Dix and Ms. Brown

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce endorses the motion approved by Vernon City Council May 25, 2020 that calls for an overdose prevention site not to be located in the downtown core and not to be in a privately owned building where private businesses may be negatively impacted.

Since the May 11, 2020 announcement on a location for an overdose prevention site, the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce has been contacted by business owners in the area of the site.

Among those we heard from is a building property manager. He informs us that:

- A signed conditional offer to lease a unit has been cancelled because of the OPS location.
- Lease negotiations for a second unit have also been halted because the OPS location.
- These cancellations mean a potential revenue loss of \$175,000 in gross rent over five years.

The Chamber also heard from a long-time businessperson in the immediate area of the OPS. He informs us that:

- Many of his clients are seniors who walk to his business and they are concerned about their safety.
- A tenant in his building has indicated they may move because of safety concerns.
- Daily, he has to clean up garbage, needles and human waste, and is faced with loitering and verbal abuse.

Another business owner has indicated that:

- There is a safety concern for clients, including children, and an OPS will be a detriment to her business.

- Ongoing issues have led to the need for a security guard outside of her door.

Our Chamber continues to believe that an OPS in the downtown core will compound existing safety concerns and decrease property values, particularly at a time when business owners are struggling with the repercussions of Covid-19. We also support Vernon City Council's motion, which states, "the better suited location would be the Vernon Jubilee Hospital as it is within walking distance for many, has access to transportation and establishes a level of anonymity for those who currently use in private."

Minister Dix and Ms. Brown, we would encourage you to not only listen to the businesspeople expressing concerns but to put yourself in their position for a few minutes and consider how you would react if your career and passion were being negatively impacted. They are sympathetic towards those in need, but they require assurances that they can continue to operate their businesses unimpeded.

The Chamber also wants to reinforce the position of the City of Vernon that this is not a debate about an overdose prevention site in the community. The issue is strictly focused on the location of the facility.

It is time for the Ministry and IH to have direct discussions with the City of Vernon, the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations in an attempt to create an environment that is healthy for all residents, whether they be OPS clients or business owners.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Krystin Kempton, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

cc. Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee MLA
Victor Cumming, Mayor of Vernon
Coun. Kari Gares, City of Vernon rep to the Chamber
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association
Colleen McEwan, IHA director of clinical operations
Dr. Karen Goodison, IHA medical health officer