

March 21, 2007

## Vancouver Drug Policy Coordinator wins national award

Donald MacPherson, the City of Vancouver's Drug Policy Coordinator, has won a 2007 Kaiser Foundation Award for Excellence. The Kaiser Foundation recognizes individuals and organizations that promote physical and mental health by reducing harm from substance use. MacPherson won the award for Excellence in Public Policy, one of six categories.

In a press release issued earlier this month, the foundation noted that MacPherson "is responsible for firmly rooting harm reduction in Vancouver soil with his groundbreaking policy document, *'A Framework for Action; A Four-Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver.'* Based on years of research and experience as a frontline worker in the city's Downtown Eastside, Donald's framework was adopted in 2001 and became the first comprehensive municipal drug policy initiative launched in Canada."

Mayor Sam Sullivan congratulated MacPherson on the honour, saying, "the City of Vancouver is fortunate to have Donald advocating for new and innovative ways of responding to the problem of drug addiction in our community."

MacPherson was nominated for the award by Nicola Hall, past president of the group From Grief to Action, a non-profit society working to improve the lives of drug users, their families and friends. In her letter accompanying the nomination, Hall wrote: "We are especially grateful to Donald for everything he has done to reduce the harm suffered by our sons and daughters, brothers, sisters and friends, who suffer from the tragedy of addiction to drugs."

MacPherson said he was pleased to be honoured with the award because it highlights the support Vancouverites have displayed for harm reduction since the City adopted the Four Pillars Drug Strategy in 2001. "In Vancouver, there is remarkably broad-based support for innovative harm-reduction initiatives such as Insite - the supervised injection site - and NAOMI (North American Opiate Medication Initiative). In fact, services such as needle exchanges are viewed as absolutely routine. My hope is that by focusing attention on Vancouver's support for evidence-based harm reduction measures, this award will spark other cities' interest in a Four-Pillar approach to drug problems."

The awards will be presented on April 16, 2007 in Toronto. Winners will receive a \$10,000 grant, to be directed to a charity of their choice.

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