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COUNCIL APPROVES PUBLIC SAFETY INSPECTION TEAM REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

District of Mission, BC – District of Mission Council has approved a series of recommendations for handling current open cases and moving forward with inspections carried out by the Public Safety Inspection Team (PSIT) under the Controlled Substance Property bylaw. These recommendations were approved by Council on Monday.

On January 24, 2011, after a number of concerns were raised with respect to the operations of the PSIT, council deferred PSIT led inspections for 30 days and asked that a full review be conducted of both the bylaw and property inspection program. The review was conducted by District Deputy CAO Paul Gipps who has put forward a number of key recommendations which will improve the program and make it more efficient in dealing with controlled substance properties.

The recommendations consist of two distinct phases, managing current open cases, and moving forward with the PSIT and Controlled Substance Property Bylaw.

In dealing with current open cases the District of Mission has initiated a review process to determine if assessed fees were warranted, and if property remediation orders were necessary. The review will have the ability to make changes to both fees levied and remediation orders. Staff will work with third party consultants where necessary. The PSIT has restructured using existing municipal resources. Moving forward inspections will be conducted on an as needed basis. Both the RCMP and inspection data support this as a natural progression of the PSIT in Mission, as there has been a significant reduction since 2008 in the number of controlled substance properties assessed fees and ordered remediation repairs.

With PSIT operating on a restructured model it is anticipated that operating costs may be reduced. As a result of operating a reduced inspection program, fees levied against controlled substance properties may also be reduced. The fee structure will be reviewed over the next few months.

The District is also establishing an administrative review process for all future disputes of PSIT inspection findings. Council has approved a public education and information program, which will see the entire PSIT process explained on the district website (mission.ca), including a public feedback forum. This program will also see educational literature developed which will be left at properties prior to and after inspections. Council will also be providing regular public communiqués on operations of PSIT as well as responding to public complaints received. The District has engaged the services of a communications firm to assist staff with this work.

The District will phase in the recommendations over the coming weeks, and anticipates all will be incorporated into the operations of the PSIT in May, 2011. A summary report will be made available to the public at the next Committee of the Whole meeting on March 7, 2011. In the meantime, the PSIT will continue to provide inspections for RCMP led files only.

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