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Beginnings**

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March 15, 2016

Chair Mihevc & Members of the Board,

The Regent Park Community Health Centre would like to congratulate the Board of Health on considering the recommendations to move forward with consultations toward the implementation of Safe Injection Sites (SIS) in Toronto and strongly encourage the Board to endorse the report and its recommendations.

Regent Park Community Health Centre is one of many needle distribution sites in Toronto. Over the past several years we have seen an increase in the number of needles distributed, the number of people accessing services, and the number of negative health events – HIV and/or Hep C infection or overdose – among the population served.

The implementation of SIS is an important resource in improving the health the people of Toronto. The evidence indicates that SIS will reduce the negative health effects including HIV and Hep C infection and loss of life associated with injection drug use, contributes to improvements in the overall health and wellbeing of the community through increased use of detox and addiction treatment services, reduction in public drug use, reductions in the amount of publicly discarded injection use equipment (ie. needles), plays an important role in HIV and Hep C prevention, and is cost-effective contributing to lower health costs.

Everyday in our work we see the importance of low-threshold interventions as a successful way to engage people and as a pathway to greater health. SIS is one more such low-threshold opportunity where people can engage with the health system in a non-judgmental fashion creating opportunities for healthier outcomes.

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The recommendation for multiple sites, integrated with existing health care services is well thought out and aligned with the unique Toronto context and best practices for harm reduction and health care.

Addressing to substance use requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. The Toronto Drug Strategy provides an excellent framework and SIS is a critical part of putting that framework into action. Again, we look forward to the leadership demonstrated of the Board, and its partners – Central Toronto CHC and South Riverdale CHC – in moving this important work forward.

This is a good step forward for the people – and the health - of Toronto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sheila Braidek', with a large loop at the start and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sheila Braidek, Executive Director

cc John Tory
 Pam McConnell
 Joe Cressy
 Paula Fletcher
 Dr David McKeown
 Lynne Raskin, SRCHC
 Angela Robertson, CTCHC