



March 17, 2016

Toronto Board of Health
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BOH@toronto.ca

Dear Toronto Board of Health Members,

The Association of Ontario Health Centres urges you to accept the report from the Medical Officer of Health on safe injection services for Toronto and endorse the recommendation for coordinated community consultations with Queen West – Central Toronto Community Health Centre and South Riverdale Community Health Centre on the integration of safe injection services into their clinical health services.

We believe that this is an important and logical next step that follows through on the findings of the *2012 Toronto and Ottawa Supervised Consumption Assessment Study* which concluded that Toronto would benefit from multiple safe injection services that are integrated into health services already serving people who inject drugs. A decision to begin community consultations would also be a consistent move forward from the Board's 2013 approval of the Medical Officer of Health's recommendation to support implementation of an integrated safe injection service model in Toronto.

The Association of Ontario Health Centres shares the widespread concern about the rising number of people dying from drug overdoses in Toronto and across the province, and the increasing role of opioids such as fentanyl in these deaths. We believe that a comprehensive and integrated approach to dealing with substance abuse is needed - that approach must include harm reduction programs including safe injection services. We strongly support the Toronto plan to offer these services within existing health centres as this provides a gateway to other health services and supports for substance users.

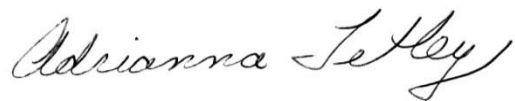
Queen West – Central Toronto Community Health Centre and South Riverdale Community Health Centre are members of the Association of Ontario Health Centres and we have every confidence that they are well equipped to deliver small scale safe injection services as part of their operations. They are well experienced and have been delivering harm reduction services for many years to people who inject drugs in their communities.

The addition of safe injection services would enable them to be more effective in reducing the risk factors leading to HIV and hepatitis, and reducing drug overdoses and deaths. These services would also benefit the local community through reduced public drug

consumption and discarded needles. Safe injection services would enable these Community Health Centres to reach more people with counselling services and referrals to drug treatment, housing, income supports and other services contributing to improved health outcomes and lower health system costs.

In summary the Association of Ontario Health Centres commends the Toronto Board of Health on your work to date on Toronto's Drug Strategy and urges you to keep moving forward to improve the health of people in Toronto by proceeding with community consultations on the integration of safe injection services at Queen West – Central Toronto Community Health Centre and South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adrianna Tetley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely," text.

Adrianna Tetley,
CEO, Association of Ontario Health Centres