



March 17, 2016

Planned Parenthood Toronto Supports Supervised Injection Sites

Dear Board of Health,

I'm writing you today to say that as a youth-focused Community Health Centre in downtown Toronto, Planned Parenthood Toronto (PPT) is a strong supporter of supervised injection services and fully supports the integration of these services into existing clinical health services. Addiction is a health issue that presents specific challenges that supervised injection services are uniquely able to overcome.

Supervised injection services (SIS) are not unknown entities – worldwide, they are well-established, evidence-based harm reduction services that have been proven to create better health outcomes for people that are using injection drugs. Canada is a leading expert in SIS and harm reduction; *insite* in Vancouver BC has seen over 2 million injections, and zero deaths. The facility has been reviewed and evaluated by researchers from across the country, all of whom have found that SIS sites contribute to a reduction in overdose deaths, decreases in HIV and Hep C transmission, a decrease in public injection and disorder, and an increase in referrals to detox and treatment.

SIS sites also provide a respectful, low-barrier entry point to health care for individuals who face the highest degree of marginalization and stigma. For many SIS participants, an injection site is the only place where they can/will receive health care. SIS sites are a connection to non-injection related services such as wound care, referrals for housing and supports, and mental health support. Outside of hospitals, many SIS users have no other realistic access to these sorts of services – SIS sites improve healthcare for clients and lessen burden on emergency services and hospitals.

Community health centers (CHC) are particularly well suited to host injection services as they have years of experience working with marginalized individuals and have deep roots in their local community. CHCs have personal relationships with clients as well as with local businesses, faith-based organizations and other community-based agencies, and are able to respond quickly to public safety concerns.

The research is in, and all the evidence points to SIS reducing harm and increasing public safety. Canadian policy-makers and leaders have the experience, protocols and best practices to make SIS in Toronto a safe and effective public health service. Addiction is a public health issue. Introducing SIS in Toronto is a strong, positive step forward in addressing the issues surrounding addiction across our city and can serve as a crucial part of the spectrum of services that make our communities healthier.

We strongly support HL10.1 and urge the Board of Health to take every possible step to improve the wellness of Toronto's most marginalized citizens.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hobbs-Blyth,

Executive Director, Planned Parenthood Toronto

choice is yours.

