

St. Stephen's
Community House

Toronto Board of Health
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March 18, 2016

Chair Mihevc & Members of the Board,

On behalf of the board, staff and members of St. Stephen's Community House, I want to congratulate the Board of Health on considering the recommendation to move forward with the process of implementing Supervised Injection Services (SIS) in Toronto. We strongly encourage the Board to endorse the Toronto Public Health report on overdose deaths and the need for SIS and we encourage the Board to implement its recommendations.

St. Stephen's Community House is a multi-service, non-profit social service organization that has been serving downtown west Toronto neighbourhoods since 1962. Our services enhance the lives of more than 24,000 people each year, with a focus on the most vulnerable people in our community, including people who use drugs. We provide counselling, case management, group support and housing support to people struggling with substance use and we distribute thousands of safer injection kits through our partnership with Toronto Public Health.

In recent years, we have grappled with the ever-increasing numbers of premature and preventable deaths of the people we serve. The deaths can be attributed to complex issues – poverty, isolation, homelessness, but also to preventable overdose. There is clear evidence that supervised injection facilities prevent fatal overdose and connect people with essential health and social services. A supervised injection service is a practical response to the overdose deaths that continue to devastate our community.

We look forward to participating in the public dialogue on SIS for Toronto and want to offer our support to all three of the proposed sites for SIS: Queen West –Central Toronto Community Health Centre, The Works at Toronto Public Health and South Riverdale Community Health Centre. All of the proposed sites are known for their high quality, integrated harm reduction and health services. A SIS is a logical extension to the existing services at these sites.

The introduction of SIS will be life saving for people who use drugs and a positive step for all of Toronto.

Sincerely,



Bill Sinclair
Executive Director