



**Public Health
Santé publique**
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

March 8, 2024

DJ Larkin
Executive Director
Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
dj_larkin@sfu.ca

Dear DJ Larkin:

Re: Support of Ontario Supervised Consumption Sites

I am writing to express Public Health Sudbury & Districts' continued support of supervised consumption services as one of many critical strategies needed to save lives from drug poisonings in the context of the escalating toxic drug crisis in Ontario. Public Health's position regarding supervised consumption services as a harm reduction strategy has not changed since our support of Réseau ACCESS Network's application to the Provincial Government for Minogawbi, The Spot, La Place in September 2021. Our community, like many others in Ontario, needs a supervised consumption site that is fully operational with stable ongoing funding.

The toxic drug crisis in our communities is ongoing and disproportionately impacts Northern communities. Since 2019 opioid-related death rates in Sudbury and districts continue to be triple those of the province. In 2022, 112 residents of the Sudbury and Manitoulin districts died from an opioid-related drug poisoning. This represents a local annualized mortality rate of 54.1 deaths per 100,000 population per year, significantly higher than the comparable rate in Ontario overall, 16.8 deaths per 100,000 population per year.

Supervised consumption services are one piece of the complex puzzle required to address the toxic drug crisis. These services provide a myriad of benefits to the community including, preventing drug poisonings and drug-related deaths, thus saving lives; increasing access to referrals for essential health care and social services; access to drug checking services; access to safe/sterile harm reduction supplies which reduce the transmission of bloodborne illness as well as other infections; and a safe and inclusive space for people who use drugs to connect and feel a sense of community.

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Since opening its doors over 17 months ago, on September 28, 2022, The Spot has proved itself to be an indispensable resource to Sudbury. In 2023 alone, The Spot had almost 1,961 visits, 2,683 consumptions, and reversed all 20 overdoses that occurred onsite, saving lives. Furthermore, harm reduction resources like drug checking strips have been used hundreds of times, preventing the risk of overdose and empowering people who use drugs to make informed decisions. Additionally, in 2023 there were 546 referrals made to on- and off-site services, connecting site members with wrap-around services and supports.

The Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts sounded the alarm on the toxic drug crisis and advocated for adequate and equitable resources for the communities in our area. In May 2021, the Board of Health passed motion [#14-21](#) called for collective action and exploration of options for immediate, medium-, and long-term solutions. In February 2023, the Board of Health passed motion [#11-23](#) reaffirming the previous motion sounding the alarm on the local and regional opioid crisis and urging the provincial government to approve funding for the Supervised Consumption Site. Motion [#39-23](#) was passed by the Board of Health in June 2023, acknowledging the severity of the toxic drug crisis in the North and motioning for a local drug crisis leadership summit, which was held in December 2023. This Summit allowed key partners and executives, including those with lived and living experience in Sudbury to [collectively support recommendations designed](#) to change the tide of the toxic drug crisis in our area. A provincially funded Supervised Consumption Site was one of those recommendations.

We believe that investing in an array of harm reduction services, including supervised consumption services, is a cost-effective strategy that saves lives, reduces healthcare expenditures, and strengthens communities. Furthermore, offering low-barrier harm reduction services and education serve as an important piece of the multipronged approach to addressing substance use stigma and improving the health and wellbeing of people who use drugs.

We thank you for your leadership, dedication, and advocacy in the effort to secure provincial funding and support of supervised consumption services in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Dr. Marlene Spruyt
Acting Medical Officer of Health

cc: Heidi Eisenhauer, Executive Director, Réseau ACCESS Network
heidie@reseauaccessnetwork.com