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Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

R E C E I V E D

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President & CEO's Office

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Referred. MAUDEEN W.
CC: CLAY A.

May 7, 2008

The Honourable Tony Clement PC MP
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the more than 60,000 academic staff at over 120 universities and colleges across Canada represented by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, we are writing to express our serious concern about your government's suppression of scientific research conducted on the Insite safe injection program.

Insite has been operating as a public health pilot project in British Columbia for several years and requires federal approval to continue past June 30, 2008. There have been over 20 peer-reviewed papers from renowned researchers internationally and across Canada and in almost every study the research demonstrates that, from a public health perspective, Insite reduces harm and has had no adverse effect on the neighbouring communities.

Recently, however, a prominent group of 12 doctors and medical researchers at the University of British Columbia issued a startling rebuke of the government's handling of research into Insite. The researchers outline projects approved for funding by the Public Health Agency of Canada that were vetoed by the Minister of Health. The research projects were cancelled or unfunded because the government has refused to allow publication of data prior to its decision on the renewal of Insite. It is simply unacceptable that the federal government has made research funding conditional on delaying the publication of new research until after the June 30 deadline for renewing the program. One of the hallmarks of science in the public interest is the right to publish in a timely manner and to conduct research free of external influence. In a virtually unprecedented move, the government is working to ensure that the best medical and sociological research will remain unpublished until *after* it announces its decision about the future of Insite.

The public health issues involved in addiction, homelessness, and communicable diseases are complex social problems that require a comprehensive response from government. Such public policy challenges call for the best in peer-reviewed science. The research conducted thus far on Insite is of international calibre.

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However, it would seem that, in this instance, the government is putting ideology ahead of sound scientific research and policy in the public interest. This is a disturbing development for both research and public policy in Canada.

We urge you to lift the moratorium on the publication of findings on Insite and to carefully consider the available scientific evidence before making a decision on the future of the Insite safe injection program.

Sincerely,



Penni Stewart
President



James L. Turk
Executive Director

cc: The Rt. Hon Stephen Harper
The Hon. Gordon Campbell
The Hon. Stephane Dion
Mr. Jack Layton
M. Gilles Duceppe
Ms. Ida J. Goodreau
Mr. Chris Petter
Ms. Cindy Oliver