

19 July 2006



Hon. Tony Clement
Minister of Health
Brooke Claxton Building
Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Clement:

As Canada's national HIV/AIDS organizations and as partners in the Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS, we write to ask you to extend the regulatory exemption allowing Insite, Vancouver's safe injection facility, to continue its life-saving work.

An impressive body of peer-reviewed research on Insite demonstrates that it has contributed to reducing risk behaviors for hepatitis C and HIV transmission, abscesses related to drug injection, and drug injection in public places. Insite has also prevented overdose fatalities – there has not been a single one at Insite. Recent research indicates that people who have used Insite have more readily sought entry into detoxification programs than those who have not. New studies have also shown that Insite has not led to initiation of drug use or any increase in drug use in the neighbourhood of the site.

Moreover, Insite's work has been accepted and endorsed by local businesses, the Vancouver Police Department and other institutions in the community. Careful monitoring has shown that there has been no increase in crime in the environs of Insite, as some had feared. The many fears that were articulated before Insite opened have been dispelled, and the benefits – not only to those who use the site, but to the whole community – have been appreciated.

Discontinuing this remarkable service would be a step backward for Canada's response to HIV/AIDS. Insite has proved that supervised injection facilities are effective and essential in fighting HIV/AIDS, minimizing the harms of drug use, and fulfilling the right to health of some of the community's most disadvantaged people.

Canada will be in the global spotlight during the upcoming XVI International AIDS Conference. We urge you to make a visionary statement by recognizing the remarkable achievements of Insite and ensuring its continuation.

Very truly yours,

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network
Canadian AIDS Society
Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange
Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre, Canadian Public Health Association
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
Canadian HIV Trials Network
Canadian Treatment Action Council
Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation
Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development

cc. The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister

CANADIAN AIDS SOCIETY SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DU SIDA



Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange
Réseau canadien d'info-traitements sida



Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre
Canadian Public Health Association
Centre canadien d'information sur le VIH/sida
Association canadienne de santé publique



Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network Réseau juridique canadien VIH/sida

Canadian HIV Trials Network Réseau canadien pour les essais VIH



Canadian Treatment Action Council

Conseil canadien de surveillance et d'accès aux traitements



Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation
Groupe de travail canadien sur le VIH et la réinsertion sociale

Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development Coalition interagence sida et développement

