

Site seeks support

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Funding set to end for injection facility



With funding for North America's only safe injection site set to run out in two months, supporters are lobbying the federal government to keep the Downtown Eastside facility open.

The Portland Hotel Society (PHS), which runs the site, has launched a letter-writing campaign, and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority has asked for a three-and-a-half-year extension.

"I'm optimistic," said PHS director Mark Townsend, citing two favourable Vancouver Police Department reports and articles in medical publications, including

The Lancet and the British Medical Journal.

"The department is reviewing the research to determine whether more research is needed before the September deadline," said Erik Wadell, a spokesman for Health Minister Tony Clement.

For Townsend, there is ample proof that the experiment is working. He pointed to his years of experience at PHS, which provides housing for addicts.

"I've found people in their rooms dead with needles in their arms," he said. "It would be really depressing if it was shut down."

steady rate of use

► The site has more than 7,000 registered users and receives roughly 600 visits per day. While there have been 450 overdoses, no one has died.