

July 20, 2006

The Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister Stephen Harper

I write to discuss the operation of Canada's first and only Supervised Injection Site (INSITE) in Vancouver BC. I work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and I have noticed several factors leading to the improvement in the culture of this community since the opening of INSITE. The least of these factors being a cleaner neighbourhood with less crime and fewer injections on the street and in back alleys. I have also noticed an increase in access to Health Care Services, and in safer practices by Injection Drug User's.

Research has shown evidence to support the services provided at INSITE, specifically with regards to the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases like HIV and Hepatitis, and the reduction of overdose deaths. To date, the published number of overdoses at INSITE is 453, each of these having a positive outcome as there have been zero deaths at INSITE.

I have had the privilege to speak with many INSITE participants and I have heard very positive feedback. Without INSITE, overdoses would occur on the streets (many of which would result in death), Health Care costs would increase, and enforcement costs would increase.

I work in a Harm Reduction setting, and also, in the same capacity, in an abstinence based setting. I see the same people return over and over again to attempt abstinence. This repetitiveness is a huge indicator that the efforts exist, but the results do not. The successes of the Harm Reduction approach at INSITE are evident and widely published, and I see these successes first hand everyday.

I ask that you carefully consider the help provided, the harm reduced, the harms/deaths prevented, and the costs saved, and that you use these considerations to allow the continuation of the necessary health care services provided at INSITE.

Sincerely,

Bethany Jeal BScN., RN
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority