

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Martin T. Schechter OBC, MD, PhD, FRSC, FCAHS
Professor and Head,
Department of Health Care and Epidemiology
Faculty of Medicine
Mather Building 5804 Fairview Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3
Telephone (604) 822-3910
Fax (604) 822-4994
<martin.schechter@ubc.ca>

Thursday, July 20, 2006

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, K1A 0A2

RE: InSite - the Vancouver Safe Injection Facility

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you both as Principal Investigator of the NAOMI Project (North American Opiate Medication Initiative) and as a researcher who has devoted the past 23 years to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. As drug use became a major factor in the spread of HIV both in Canada and around the world, I have naturally been led into the study of the prevention and treatment of addiction.

The evidence is now clear that safe injection facilities offer an important avenue to prevent the most devastating consequences of injection drug use, namely lethal infections such as HIV and death. Because these facilities are utilized by the most difficult-to-reach individuals, they provide a critical window of opportunity that might not exist otherwise to bring such people into contact with preventions and treatments.

I realize it is easy at first glance to conclude that such facilities are simply enablers of drug use that might exacerbate the problem rather than ameliorate it. However, if you and your officials consider all the evidence carefully you will come to realize that this is not so. Indeed, taking into account the tremendous burden of suffering and taxpayer expense that results from addiction and its consequences, harm reduction activities such as InSite represent both wise social policy and prudent economic investment.

Yours sincerely,

Martin T. Schechter OBC, MD, PhD, FRSC, FCAHS
Professor and Head
Canada Research Chair in HIV/AIDS and Urban Population Health