



For Immediate Release
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Conservative Government Must Renew Funding for Safe Injection Site

Health Minister Tony Clement must renew funding to allow Canada's only safe injection site to continue operating after a series of reports - including one from the RCMP - have concluded that the site has had a positive impact, Liberal Health Critic Ruby Dhalla and Senator Larry Campbell said today.

"Studies are showing that there has been a drop in crime in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside since Insite opened. The site is not contributing to increased crime or new cases of addiction; it is controlling the spread of HIV because addicts have access to clean needles and is in fact encouraging them to seek treatment," said Mr. Campbell, who as a former mayor of Vancouver, was instrumental in establishing the site.

"To date, Prime Minister Harper and Health Minister Tony Clement have been silent on this issue. We are calling on them to look at the evidence and allow this very important project to continue," said Ms. Dhalla.

"The Harper government must renew funding and extend the Health Canada exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act - which is set to expire on September 12 - in order for the site to continue operating."

Ms. Dhalla met with Insite stakeholders on a recent trip to Vancouver and said they are deeply concerned about the fate of the facility, particularly in light of Mr. Harper's absence from the International AIDS conference in Toronto this week and Mr. Clement's postponement of an announcement on AIDS funding.

"The former Liberal government funded this project to the tune of \$500,000 a year, and as a result we have less crime in the area, less public drug use and a lowered risk of HIV infection. Prime Minister Harper and Minister Clement must put their right-wing political ideology aside and look at the facts - this program works.

"It's time for the Conservative government to make known its intentions with regard to the safe injection site," said Ms. Dhalla.

The report commissioned by the RCMP shows that the site hasn't increased crime in the area or attracted drug dealers or users from other jurisdictions.

It comes on the heels of two other studies by a criminologist at Simon Fraser University and the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS - recognized as one of the world's leading research facilities - that produced the same findings.

The B.C. Centre study also found that Insite is leading to increased participation in detoxification programs and addiction treatment, and has reduced the number of deaths from overdoses.

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