

# News Release

## Harper Government respects community concerns with new legislation for Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

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For immediate release

**OTTAWA** –The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health, accompanied by the Honourable Minister Steven Blaney, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, announced the Harper Government has introduced the *Respect for Communities Act*, which would require any potential applications for supervised drug consumption sites in Canada to meet clear criteria before such applications can be considered.

“Our Government believes that creating a location for sanctioned use of drugs obtained from illicit sources has the potential for great harm in a community,” said Minister Aglukkaq. “Accordingly, we believe that the application process needs to be changed to create formal opportunities for local voices to be heard, and their views considered before an exemption would be considered.”

“The illicit drugs covered by the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* pose serious risks to the health of Canadians,” said Minister Blaney. “Substances obtained from illegal sources affect public safety and may fuel organized crime, and exemptions for illicit substances must be carefully assessed.”

Supervised drug consumption sites require an exemption from Health Canada under Section 56 of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* in order to legally operate.

This same section of the Act is used to give researchers permission to use controlled substances in scientific research like clinical trials, allow doctors to treat patients with methadone, make it possible for researchers to legally use controlled drugs to euthanize certain animals and allow law enforcement agencies to train police dogs to detect illicit drugs.

Currently, the same review process is in place for all these circumstances, meaning that Health Canada treats a law enforcement agency’s application for the purposes of training police dogs in the same way that it would treat an application to open a site in which drug addicts would use street heroin.

The *Respect for Communities Act* would raise the bar for applications to establish supervised drug consumption sites that would allow for the use of what would otherwise be illegal drugs. It will not affect any type of Section 56 exemptions for substances obtained from licit sources, which will follow the current process.

Under the proposed new system, applicants for supervised drug consumption sites would need to provide information outlining the views of a number of stakeholders including:

- Local law enforcement;
- Municipal leaders;
- Public health officials; and
- Provincial and territorial ministers responsible for health, which would include documentation showing what treatment options are available for those dealing with addiction.

An applicant would also be required to provide documentation that shows the site's expected impact on crime rates, the public health reasons for needing such a site, and evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the site's operations.

These criteria are consistent with those laid out by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in its [2011 ruling on Insite](#).

“Front-line law enforcement strongly believes that it is important for there to be a high threshold for applicants to meet before any supervised consumption site can be considered,” said Tom Stamatakis, President of the Canadian Police Association. “While treating drug addiction is an important goal, my experience in Vancouver is that these sites also lead to an increase in criminal behaviour and disorder in the surrounding community and have a significant impact on police resources, and that's why it will be vital for the views of local police to be taken into account.”

The proposed legislation also provides authority for the Minister of Health to publicly post a Notice of Application regarding proposed supervised drug consumption sites, and seek input directly from members of the general public.

Exemption applications for a supervised drug consumption site will continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, according to the factors outlined by the SCC.

These actions demonstrate how the Harper Government is acting to protect public health and maintain public safety in Canadian communities.

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*Également disponible en français*

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