

NEWS RELEASE



May 9, 2008

Nurses say InSite clinic services must continue

Stephen Harper must stop playing politics with essential healthcare and with people's lives

Nurses who support the InSite Supervised Injection Site, as well as other harm reduction and prevention approaches to healthcare, gathered at the clinic this morning to add their voices to the call for the continuation of such services. They also called on the federal government to stop playing politics with these proven life-saving healthcare services.

"Addiction discriminates against no-one; it affects people from every social, political, economic, geographic and faith community. This clinic needs to be kept open indefinitely and similar services need to expand across the province and the country," says Debra McPherson, President of the BC Nurses' Union.

"Stop putting politics before saving lives, Mr. Harper and let's get on with the important work of providing care and opportunities for recovery for some of our most vulnerable citizens, through innovative public health services such as InSite."

The federal government has only granted a temporary exemption to InSite under Section 56 of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and the exemption runs out on June 30th. Marnie Hewlett, BCNU's regionally-elected representative for the clinic's nurses says this uncertainty makes the nurses' jobs even more stressful.

"Keeping these dedicated health care providers in a constant state of limbo about their jobs and about the future of the services for their patients is unfair and cruel," said Hewlett.

Registered Nurses have a professional obligation to provide clients with evidence-based care and support. An overwhelming number of peer-reviewed evaluations of the effectiveness of this clinic in reducing HIV risk behaviour, preventing overdoses and increasing the likelihood of clients seeking detox have been completed.

Liz Evans, Executive Director of the Portland Hotel Society, which is one of the groups that runs the site said, "There is consensus in the city, the region and the province that these services are needed. We want the federal government to acknowledge and respect the expertise and experience that British Columbians have demonstrated in providing creative solutions in the face of the complex problem of addiction."

The BC Nurses' Union will continue to work with individuals, community groups and organizations, and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to lobby to keep the site open and to promote strategies that promote health, not end it.

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