



June 22, 2018

Response to City of Hamilton's Public Health Services request for Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton to investigate finding space for a Safe Consumption Site

Dear Dr. Richardson,

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton (SJHH) and Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) were asked by the City of Hamilton's Public Health Services to look at the feasibility of housing a supervised consumption site in our hospital facilities as one of the strategies to address the opioid crisis in Hamilton.

Both HHS and SJHH appreciate the City's commitment to addressing the high number of overdoses in our community due to opioids and other drugs. Our hospitals are similarly committed to creating partnerships with the City and other community organizations to create addiction treatment programs and harm reduction services to help these vulnerable populations.

Each hospital did a thorough review of our respective hospital and community facilities located within or near the downtown core - the area where those most likely to use the service live, as identified in the Hamilton Supervised Injection Site Feasibility Study from December 2017. This review included HHS' Hamilton General Hospital campus and SJHH's Charlton site.

In reviewing space at these locations, we considered the needs of clients, including the level of privacy and anonymity the space offered, as well as the requirements noted by Public Health, including the need for integration of medical services, social services and other harm reduction services. Additionally, our hospitals reviewed the impact of co-location with other existing hospital services such as addiction withdrawal and children's health care, as well as the need to continue providing care to our community through all of the existing HHS and SJHH health services.

The result of the reviews was that SJHH and HHS could find no space that fit all of these criteria. Both HHS' Hamilton General Hospital campus and St. Joseph's Charlton site are caring for high volumes of patients with very different needs in very limited space. That, coupled with the requirements for privacy, anonymity, and accessibility, as well as the needs of current patients, means that neither hospital can offer appropriate and practical space for a Safe Consumption Site at this point in time.

Both HHS and SJHH recognize that finding a community site has been challenging. We want to take this opportunity to once again voice our commitment to working with the City and our community partners to help build services that provide a continuum of care for addiction treatment and harm reduction. This would include assisting to operate and support a Safe Consumption Site in the community. Such a plan could include the purchase of a property with City funds and a collaborative model with community and hospital partners.

Recently, St. Joseph's opened up a Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic across from its Charlton site that provides rapid assessment and treatments for those with drug use issues who are ready to make a change. This was one of the recommended programs in Hamilton's drug strategy. It is important to note



that co-locating a Safe Consumption Site near such a program would introduce significant risk to a population actively seeking help with harm reduction and recovery from addiction.

We want to commend the work of the Shelter Health Network and Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre in creating a temporary Overdose Prevention Site in Hamilton. Community settings such as this maximize the ability to meet clients' requirements for privacy and anonymity, as well as easy access. As healthcare providers, we intend to remain closely involved in working with community groups in Hamilton, and the City, in developing creative solutions to the opioid epidemic facing our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Winnie Doyle".

Winnie Doyle, Executive Vice President Clinical Programs and
Chief Nursing Executive
St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "W. Stephen".

Dr. Wes Stephen
Executive Vice President, Clinical Operations & COO
Hamilton Health Sciences