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03 Summer 2013

# SHARP focus



PROVIDING CARE AND SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST VULNERABLE LIVING WITH HIV

*"Home is not where you live, but where they understand you"*

*Christian Morgenstern, German Poet*

## Respecting All Communities?: Bill C-65

On June 10, 2013 the federal government moved against effective harm reduction strategies. Under the Respect for Communities Act, anyone wanting to open a facility similar to In-Site in Vancouver will be required to present impact studies and consult with police, health authorities, as well as municipal and provincial governments.

As an agency that prides itself on caring and building strong relationships with the clients we serve SHARP knows the incredible difference an effective harm reduction program means to do our work well. We also know first-hand the devastating effect illicit drugs have on people in our community including the transmission of HIV and Hepatitis C or death due to overdose.

This decision introducing restrictive legislation to control access to Supervised Consumption Sites providing people with chronic addictions a safe, clean and supportive environment, taking drug use off the streets and into clinical settings is discouraging as it is a move away from evidence based policy.

There have been several studies of safe injection sites which show there are significant public health benefits and huge cost savings for the health system. Evidence demonstrates that harm reduction programs - such as Vancouver's supervised injection site, Insite—bring critical health and social services to vulnerable populations. This is especially so for those experiencing poverty, mental illness and homelessness, and for others who are not well-connected to traditional health and community supports. In the case of Vancouver's Insite, neighbourhood business owners, service providers and residents agree about the clinic's positive impact, both on the health of the people who use it and on the health of the community.

We know that many people who use drugs often are poor, marginalized, and homeless, and if they need a place to do their drugs, they will find one wherever and whenever they are able or are allowed access. This can be in public washrooms, between dumpsters, back alleys, and even on the street where they are visible to mainstream society and even at times children. When a person has all of these barriers to injecting in private they have no choice but to be visible and inject unsafely and in public places. People who use drugs do not want to be visible to the public, and a supervised injection site facility would alleviate all of the issues that they face in remaining invisible.

With the introduction of safe injection sites across the country, many of society's problems around unsafe and public injecting would resolve themselves. There is clear evidence that safe injection sites address risky injection behaviours, and that they therefore could potentially lead to decreased complications like HIV and hepatitis infections, as well as abscesses and necrosis.

Although harm reduction strategies may not be what we want to see in our neighbourhoods there is overwhelming evidence that it helps people get connected with appropriate services, reduces health care and policing/criminalization costs; SHARP and its community partners have demonstrated this over and over again.

Research shows that the use of supervised injection sites is associated with increased access to detoxification services and longer term treatment programs. It is a place that places value on building trust and relationships with a person, so that if they decide that they want support to quit using drugs there is someone there for them— something that SHARP truly embraces and provides support for.

In fact there is the argument that government should embrace safer injection sites as they are the law and order option. Unfortunately, much of the government opposition stems from the view that these programs result in less control over injection-drug use, when the opposite is actually true. Not only do injections take place out of public view and away from vulnerable youth who may be curious about injecting, but onsite disposal also ensures used needles cannot find their way into public spaces. In-Site further forces its clients to temporarily remain onsite after injecting and where an addiction treatment program is co-located.

Just last week, Toronto Public Health presented a report at a board meeting, recommending safe-injection sites for people who use drugs inside existing health care institutions to help reduce the number of drug-related deaths. The report cited research from Vancouver and abroad showing that safe injection sites are effective in preventing drug overdoses and reducing the risk of disease transmission. As such, the report from Toronto Public Health also asked for recent draft federal legislation to be withdrawn.

Dr. Douglas Sinclair, the Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto wants a site established sooner rather than later. *"Safe places to inject help us create a better community for all. Supervised injection is something that has been tried and successful in any number of places in the world as a critical component of harm reduction campaigns"*.

Of course, regardless of how one's view of Insite is framed, caught in the middle are desperately addicted Canadians just trying to find help and avoid acquiring a life-threatening infectious disease. The people we need to help and show compassion to are our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, children, neighbours in spite of their dependency.



# Summer Fun!

*Juliana Prestes, Recreation Programmer*

As the summer rolls in things are busy with the residents across all the houses. Juliana has stepped into the role of Recreation Programmer for the summer and has created a long list of activities, programs and day trips for the residents to participate in. So far the residents have been Stampeding, making full use of the karaoke, having fun day trips to the park and there's much more to come!

Juliana comes to us all the way from New Brunswick but is originally from Brazil, so watch out for a summer Brazilian party in the next month! Juliana comes to us with a rich background in HIV with an interest in both the medical and social perspective.

In other news... **SHARP has been nominated for The Lieutenant Governor's Circle on Mental Health and Addiction 2012 True Leadership Award! It is such an honour to be recognised for the multi-disciplinary care we provide to all of our residents!**



## HIV research in Alberta

On May 28, 2013, SHARP, on behalf of the Alberta Community Council on HIV (ACCH), and the Universities Without Walls hosted a full-day of presentations describing HIV research currently underway in Alberta. This *Alberta Research Round-Up* showcased HIV-related research initiatives addressing diverse topics, such as clinical care, housing, newcomer health, prevention, labour force participation, and online men's outreach. Dr. Catherine Worthington presented on the SHARP-led study on the Impact of Supported Housing in Western Canada; describing the service mapping currently being done in Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. The day concluded with two keynote presentations on gay men's wellness research – Dr. Barry Adam, Ontario HIV Treatment Network/University of Windsor, and Dr. Conall O'Cleirigh, Harvard University/Fenway Health Centre, Boston.

ACCH members participated in this information-sharing event along with academic and student researchers

engaged in community-based HIV research in Alberta and elsewhere. After most presentations, participants were encouraged to engage in small-group discussion and to record research questions that emerged as a result.

With the support of the CIHR REACH CBR Collaborative Centre, members of ACCH participated in the Alberta Community-Based Research Strategy for the HIV Sector meeting on May 29, 2013. The purpose of this second day was to identify gaps and opportunities for meaningful community-based HIV research over the next 3-5 years. Informed by the previous day's presentations about current research in Alberta, in-depth discussion on gay men's health and translating research into policy, and individual expertise members of ACCH discussed Alberta's research priorities. While further discussion is needed to establish concrete research objectives moving forward, discussion illuminated priority topics shared by members including access to testing, harm reduction and stigma & resilience.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### Upcoming Events



Sunday August 11th, 2013  
**Bowls for Beswick**

"One of Calgary's best events!" Participants come from as far as Thunder Bay! This year is a new location and a theme so come dressed in your finest pink and purple and support us!

Sunday September 1, 2013  
**Calgary Pride Street Festival**  
Shaw Millineum Park  
Come celebrate diversity and help build a better community for all

### Deep Roots IV

Broken City  
Pride fund raiser for SHARP!  
DJs, entertainers, prizes, and auction!

Sunday September 22d 2013  
**Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life**  
Join us and over 700 walkers to raise awareness and funds for HIV programming in the Calgary region.

## Giving Made Easy

Did you know that you can donate to SHARP through the United Way? If your workplace participates in an annual or ongoing campaign where funds are directed to the United Way, you can designate your dollars to SHARP by quoting our Charitable Registration Number (897948436RR0001) in Section 2, Option C on the form your employer provides. The SHARP Foundation is not a recipient of direct United Way funding.

There are many other ways to give to SHARP as well! To make a monetary contribution, visit [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) or contact us directly. To purchase an item for one of our houses and/or programs, check out our wish lists on our website or [www.amazon.ca/gp/registry/wishlist/ref=wish\\_list](http://www.amazon.ca/gp/registry/wishlist/ref=wish_list). Items range from measuring spoons to washer and dryer.

### Volunteer

Of course your time is one of your most valuable assets, especially to SHARP! There are many volunteer opportunities in every part of this organization and therefore something of interest to almost everyone! Do you have any skills, abilities or talents that you'd like to share? We would love to hear from you! Contact us to discuss ways you could share some of what makes you special with SHARP!

Do you have other ideas of how you would like to give? We welcome your feedback! You can call 403.272.2912 or email [info@theSHARPFoundation.com](mailto:info@theSHARPFoundation.com).



hope | dignity | compassion

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