

News Release Communiqué

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HEALTH MINISTER'S INDECISION ON INSITE IGNORES SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Federal government playing politics with people's lives

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 2, 2006 — The federal government's indecision on extending the trial period for Insite, Vancouver's supervised injection facility flies in the face of internationally recognized, peer-reviewed evidence, said a group of national HIV/AIDS organizations today.

"Insite is saving people's lives, reducing HIV and hepatitis C transmission and steering people to treatment for their addictions," said Kevin Barlow, Executive Director of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. "The facts speak for themselves, but the federal government isn't listening."

Yesterday, federal Health Minister Tony Clement announced he has deferred a decision on extending Insite's trial period to December 31, 2007, claiming the need for more research.

But extensive research has already been done by the British Columbia Centre for Excellence on HIV/AIDS. It clearly demonstrates that Insite has lowered the rates of syringe-sharing, deaths from overdoses, and HIV and hepatitis C infection, while increasing the chances of directing drug users to addiction treatment services. The evidence has been published in leading medical journals, including the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *The Lancet*.

"Health professionals from around the world have studied Insite and unequivocally said that it is a success," said Joanne Csete, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "Minister Clement is asking questions that have already been answered. He's stalling. The question is why?"

Insite has earned the support of the Vancouver Police Department, local residents and business groups, the City of Vancouver, and scientists and AIDS experts from across the country and around the world.

"This delaying tactic is obviously more about political manoeuvring than sound policy-making in the public interest," said Csete. "The government has a responsibility to help prevent HIV. That's what Insite is doing. But instead of

supporting Insite, the government is blatantly disregarding evidence in favour of ideology — and the people of Vancouver deserve better.”

National AIDS organizations endorsing this statement include the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange and the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation.

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