

Community Response: Stefanson Government Introduces Legislation To Stop Life Saving Services

(WINNIPEG, MB, TREATY 1 TERRITORY AND THE HOMELAND OF THE METIS NATION):

Please see the following joint statement in response to the introduction of Bill 33 in the Manitoba Legislature (signatories can be found at bottom of the release):

“The drug poisoning crisis is taking lives and causing chaos in every community in Manitoba. People in Winnipeg and across the province [have been clear](#) that they want the provincial government to support life-saving harm reduction services, including safer consumption services and safe supply. Instead, with the introduction of [Bill 33](#), the provincial government has chosen to target organizations providing life-saving services to vulnerable communities for daring to provide these services. This political move discredits harm reduction services, undermines the community’s urgent call for supervised consumption services and threatens the Mobile Overdose Prevention Site operating in Winnipeg through Sunshine House.

The community organizations and service providers who work with people who use substances have repeatedly invited partnership to develop standards and regulations around harm reduction and addictions services, legislated or otherwise, and encouraged the government to commit to supporting these strategies as part of the continuum of care. These invitations have been ignored and denied. Not one of the over eighty organizations who signed an [open letter](#) directly in regards to these services has seen a response to that plea for support, let alone been consulted in the drafting of this bill.

Instead, at the 11th hour before an election, a government that has consistently put forth [outright fabrications](#) about the role and impact of supervised consumption sites has introduced legislation designed to eliminate the threat of a good example.

Unfortunately, the new Minister of Mental Health and Community Services has continued this pattern of misleading rhetoric in her [op-ed](#). No one in the community believes that supervised consumption sites represent a “silver bullet”; far from it. Rather, we see these services as a fighting chance for tomorrow. The issue has been studied repeatedly and [the evidence is clear](#): Supervised consumption sites save lives. People are dying every day due to the toxic drug supply on our streets. No one enters a recovery program - no matter how well regulated - after they are dead.

This bill does not “open the door” to supervised consumption sites. Rather, it closes that door under the cover of regulation. The need to support harm reduction services in Manitoba, and the continuum of care which includes supervised consumption and overdose prevention services, is urgent and immediate. We call on the provincial government to rescind this bill, sit down with community health centres, people who use drugs and service providers and get to work on supporting life-saving services.

Community organizations and individuals who love people who use drugs are encouraged to sign up to speak against Bill 33 here:

https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/committees/committee_registration.html

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