

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health
FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / CEO
DATE: 2018 May 17

UPDATE: SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION FACILITIES

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 026-18 re: “Update — Supervised Consumption Facilities” for information.

Key Points

- On April 20, 2018, MLHU and RHAC submitted three applications to the Ministry of Health and Health Canada to operate one mobile and two fixed Supervised Consumption Facilities.
- Neighbourhood meetings were held in regard to both fixed site locations.
- In response to a delegation from the Medical Officer of Health, the City of London’s Planning and Environment Committee recommended that City Council endorse Supervised Consumption Services in principle, and specifically at both 241 Simcoe Street and 446 York Street.

Background

The Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) and the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) have worked together with several partners in the health, social services, and emergency response sectors to address the increased rate of infectious diseases, such as HIV, infective endocarditis, and invasive Group A Streptococcus (iGAS), as well as fatal overdoses among people who inject drugs (PWID). On April 20, 2018, three applications were submitted to the Ministry of Health and Health Canada for an exemption under the Controlled Drug and Substances Act (CDSA) to operate Supervised Consumption Facilities (SCF). These applications included requests to operate two fixed SCF sites, as well as one mobile site.

Location

Data collected from London Cares Homeless Response Services, Downtown London, RHAC, and MLHU has helped to identify where improperly disposed needles are most prevalent. This information can be used as a proxy for identifying where injection drug use occurs in public spaces. Generally, these areas include alleys, behind buildings, parks, and parking lots in spaces out of sight from the street. From this data, it is shown that the areas currently experiencing moderately high degrees of injection drug use are the downtown core, South of Horton (SoHo), Old East Village (OEV), and Hamilton Road neighbourhoods. As part of the community consultations and survey, participants were asked to identify potential locations for an SCF. Multiple respondents indicated the SoHo, Downtown/Core and Old East Village areas as possible sites. This information assisted in deciding where to locate the two fixed sites, as well as service areas for the mobile vehicle.

After an extensive review of several properties, 120 York Street and 372 York Street were identified as potential fixed sites, but were ultimately abandoned when lease negotiations failed. Subsequently, several new locations came under consideration, with 446 York Street and 241 Simcoe Street being the most feasible. The 446 York Street site is in close proximity to the Men’s Mission emergency shelter, where many of those experiencing homelessness are also battling addictions. It is also suited to serve clients from the OEV, Downtown, and SoHo neighbourhoods. The building has ample space to provide wraparound services to address addictions, mental health, wound care, and Indigenous supports. It is proposed that the 241 Simcoe Street location be established on the ground floor of a London and Middlesex Housing Corporation building,

where clients would access SCF services through a discreet, separate entrance to the building. The location is also directly situated within an area experiencing challenges with substance use. As it is on the northern edge of the SoHo neighbourhood, it would be accessible to clients from the area, as well as to those from Downtown and the Salvation Army Centre of Hope emergency shelter. While the location is within a residential facility, support from both the Board of the London and Middlesex Housing Corporation and the SoHo Community Association would suggest that many people in the neighbourhood already recognize that the drug crisis is affecting their area, and that an SCF has the potential to help reduce its impact.

The mobile facility will serve downtown, SoHo, and OEV. Partners will be engaged in the specifics of facility locations and lengths of stops.

Neighbourhood Meetings

On April 20, 2018, representatives from MLHU and RHAC met with residents of 241 Simcoe to share the proposed location, to discuss the impacts of SCFs, and to hear residents' concerns. A second meeting was held by LMHC to seek feedback from tenants, particularly those who were not able to attend or were uncomfortable voicing their opinion at the April 20 meeting.

On Thursday, April 26, 2018, neighbourhood meetings were held with property owners, business owners, and residents located within 120 metres of the proposed SCFs (both the 241 Simcoe Street and 446 York Street locations). These *pro forma* meetings followed the requirements for public engagement as set out in London City Council's policy on the siting of Temporary Overdose Prevention Sites (TOPS) and SCFs. The Council Policy requires meeting with neighbouring residents and businesses within 120 metres of a proposed TOPS or SCF location. Attendees at these meetings were provided with study findings demonstrating that SCFs help save lives, prevent spread of disease, reduce health care expenditures, and can help improve neighbourhoods and property values. The MLHU and RHAC have been exploring innovative ways to improve the design and delivery of SCFs, and continue to seek input from stakeholders.

Attendees were also given an update on the success of the TOPS, the role of community partners, a review of the site-specific public consultation feedback, and a floor plan of the proposed site. The meeting also provided an overview of the facility's proposed operational model, as well as an opportunity to hear community concerns, discuss measures that could be taken to mitigate those concerns, and establish a system for ongoing communication with the community. [Appendix A](#) outlines feedback received at these meetings.

Conclusion / Next Steps

On April 30, 2018, in response to a delegation from the Medical Officer of Health, the Planning and Evaluation Committee recommended that London City Council: endorse the provision of SCFs in London; affirm that it supports the provision of SCFs at 241 Simcoe Street and 446 York Street, in accordance with Council policy; direct civic administration to begin neighbourhood safety planning; and direct civic administration to work with LMHC to advance this project.

London City Council's Planning and Environment Committee will meet again on May 14, 2018, to consider a zoning bylaw amendment to create a zoning category for SCFs and TOPS. Once zoning is established, an application for a zoning amendment for both sites will be submitted to the City for consideration at a future Planning and Environment Committee meeting.

At the time of writing, the Ministry of Health and Health Canada are reviewing these applications.

This report prepared by the Sexual Health Team, Environmental Health and Infectious Diseases Division.



Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health / CEO