

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for your correspondence concerning supervised drug injection sites.

On October 17, 2013, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-2, the *Respect for Communities Act*, which sets out the criteria that must be addressed by individuals seeking an exemption for activities involving illicit substances in a supervised drug injection site. Should Bill C-2 be passed and brought into force, the provisions set out in the new legislation would apply to future exemption applications of this nature.

These criteria are consistent with those outlined by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 2011 decision in the case regarding *Insite*: the impact of such a site on crime rates; the local conditions indicating a need for such a site; the regulatory structure in place to support the facility; the resources available to support its maintenance; and expressions of community support or opposition.

Applicants would need to provide the following: scientific evidence showing that there is a medical benefit to the proposed activities; letters of opinion from key stakeholders; measures to prevent diversion; and a demonstration of the financial sustainability of the site. The proposed legislation would also authorize Health Canada to publicly post a Notice of Application for an exemption for a supervised drug injection site, and seek input directly from members of the public. This input, along with the criteria that would need to be addressed by an applicant, would provide the Department with information required to balance public health and public safety considerations, in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, when assessing such applications.

I would also like to take this opportunity to provide you with information on the National Anti-Drug Strategy. The Strategy is the federal government's comprehensive response to illicit drug use in Canada. Launched in 2007, the Strategy is a collaborative effort involving the departments of Justice, Public Safety, and Health. Its goal is to contribute to safer and healthier communities by reducing and contributing to the elimination of illicit drug use in Canada.

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Since 2007, Health Canada has invested over half a billion dollars into the three action plans of the Strategy: preventing illicit drug use, treating those with illicit drug dependencies, and combatting the production and distribution of illicit drugs. More information about the Strategy is available at <http://www.nationalantidrugstrategy.gc.ca>.

Under the Prevention Action Plan, the Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund (DSCIF) contribution program funds community-based health promotion and prevention projects to reduce drug use among youth aged 10 to 24. Since 2007, the DSCIF has funded 104 multi-year projects across Canada, representing approximately \$47.4 million in investments.

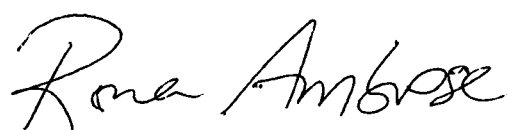
On December 18, 2013, I joined physicians and leading addiction recovery specialists at a roundtable meeting at the Cedars at Cobble Hill Addiction Treatment Centre on Vancouver Island to discuss treatment and recovery. At that time, I announced \$11.5 million in funding over five years for A Health Promotion and Drug Prevention Strategy for Canada's Youth, a national project led by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse as part of the Strategy. The goal of this project is to reduce drug abuse among Canadians between the ages of 10 and 24 through education, national prevention standards and building sustainable partnerships.

Under the Treatment Action Plan, the Drug Treatment Funding Program provides \$13.2 million annually to provincial and territorial governments and other stakeholders to improve access to quality treatment services for people addicted to illicit drugs.

Our government will continue to support drug treatment programs that work to end drug use in a safe way, so that those struggling with addictions can recover a drug-free life.

Thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rona Ambrose". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Hon. Rona Ambrose, P.C., M.P.