



**Waterloo Region  
Community Legal Services**

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Via email

July 21, 2021

Mayor Kathryn McGarry and Members of City of Cambridge Council  
c/o City Clerk  
City of Cambridge  
50 Dickson Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Cambridge, Ontario  
N1R 8S1

Your Worship and Members of Council:

Re: Support for Consumption Treatment Services ("CTS") Site in Cambridge

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors for Waterloo Region Community Legal Services ("WRCLS"). We are a community legal aid clinic providing services to the low-income population of Waterloo Region. WRCLS has an office at Langs Health Centre and provides legal services to the Cambridge community. Our focus is on the following areas of law:

-housing, income supports, employment, immigration, Indigenous Justice and consumer debt.

We understand that the City of Cambridge is currently engaged in a Community Consultation Process in order to determine the appropriate location of the CTS site. WRCLS recognizes the importance of safe consumption sites in urban core areas as an important life-saving tool in the opioid crisis. We understand that there is significant public opposition to having a CTS in the urban core areas of Cambridge, specifically downtown Galt. However, we are writing to urge Cambridge Council to make an appropriate decision based on the needs of the vulnerable members of the community. People in our community are dying unnecessarily from opioid overdoses. These deaths are preventable. The CTS in Kitchener, which is located in the urban core, has reversed hundreds of overdoses during the short time it has been in operation.<sup>1</sup> The City of Cambridge has a higher rate of opioid overdose service calls to EMS per 100,000 population compared to Kitchener and Waterloo.<sup>2</sup>

Clients can access treatment information and obtain referrals to other social service agencies when accessing the services at the CTS. In addition, clients have access to sterile syringes to ensure that they are not exposed to HIV or hepatitis infections. Accessing these safe consumption sites is a basic human right to health and security of the person. Locating the CTS site in a place where there are few barriers to access is key to ensuring the success of the services.

The benefits of safe consumption sites are well documented:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/consumption-and-treatment-services.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regional-government/resources/Reports-Plans--Data/Public-Health-and-Emergency-Services/Waterloo-Region-Opioid-Bulletin-March-2021.PDF>

"SDCFs (Supervised Drug Consumption Facilities) bring people who use drugs into contact with health care services, such as counselling, drug treatment and physical and mental health practitioners services.

- SDCFs provide education concerning HIV/AIDS and drug dependency.
- SDCFs stabilize and promote the health of clients.
- SDCFs reduce public drug use and associated disturbances.
- SDCFs help prevent crime in the neighbourhoods around the facilities.
- SDCFs reduce costs to the health and law enforcement systems.
- SDCFs promote community integration and improved quality of life of people who use drugs."<sup>3</sup>

WRCLS understands that there will be pressure on Council to locate the CTS in an area that is removed from the core of the community, due to concerns that having a site in the urban core will have an adverse effect on businesses and neighbouring properties. However, that is precisely where the CTS needs to be to serve its intended function. The role of the CTS is to help some of the most marginalized and vulnerable members of our community with as few barriers to access as possible. Placing the CTS in a remote or inconvenient location will hinder the goals of the site.

We appreciate your careful consideration of this difficult but very important determination.

Yours very truly,

WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES



Shannon Down, Executive Director on behalf of  
Robert Smith, Chair, Board of Directors

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<sup>3</sup> Legislating for Health and Human Rights: Model Law on Drug Use and HIV/AIDS Supervised drug consumption facilities, a report by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network <https://www.hivpolicy.org/Library/HPP001613.pdf>