

COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FOR A **SUPERVISED**
CONSUMPTION SITE
IN OTTAWA



CSCS
OTTAWA

CAMPAIGN FOR
SAFER CONSUMPTION
SITES IN OTTAWA

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	2
Introduction	3
Summary	3
Why Advocate for Safer Consumption Sites in Ottawa?	4
Residential Canvassing Campaign	5
Business Canvassing Campaign	6
Conclusion.....	7

Acknowledgement

We wish to thank the many people who have joined our campaign since its formation in 2011, and contributed their time, energy, expertise, and enthusiasm to help push for a safer and healthier Ottawa. A particular thanks is owed to the volunteers who participated in our residential and business canvassing campaigns, without whom this report would not have been possible.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the people who live and work in Lowertown and the ByWard Market who graciously agreed to engage in discussions about community health in their neighbourhood.

Finally, we wish to thank the members of the Drug Users Advocacy League, whose work fighting for the rights of people who use drugs inspires us to take action.

This report, and the canvassing activity upon which it is based, was not commissioned by any other group or agency, and was conducted and prepared without remuneration by members of the community. The views expressed are those of the members of the Campaign for Safer Consumption Sites in Ottawa.

CSCS Ottawa is proud to be an action group with the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, University of Ottawa chapter.

Introduction

This report, prepared by the Campaign for Safer Consumption Sites in Ottawa, provides an account of recent initiatives undertaken by the group to engage with members of the community on the subject of supervised drug consumption sites.

In particular, it presents the results of the residential and business canvassing campaigns conducted in Ottawa's Lowertown and ByWard Market neighbourhoods in the spring and summer of 2013.

Our purpose in undertaking this activity was firstly to draw attention to the serious health crisis facing people who use drugs in Ottawa, and secondly to gather the opinions of those who live and work in an area of the city most impacted by problematic drug use.

We hope that by sharing this information with fellow community members, frontline health and social service providers, politicians, police, and the media, we can attract support to our campaign and ultimately meet our goal of seeing supervised consumption sites opened in Ottawa.

About CSCS Ottawa

CSCS Ottawa is a grassroots organization of community members who advocate for the creation of safer consumption sites for people who use drugs. For more information on our group, and to find out how you can get involved in our campaign, visit www.cscsottawa.ca.

Summary

In 2013, CSCS volunteers went door-to-door to residences in Lowertown, providing information on supervised consumption sites and gathering feedback on a short questionnaire. Canvassers spoke with 115 residents.

- 76% said they thought that supervised drug consumption sites should be opened in Ottawa.
- 80% of residents who believed supervised consumption sites should be created in Ottawa supported a site opening in their own neighbourhood.

Members of CSCS also visited businesses in the ByWard Market, speaking with business owners, managers, and senior staff about drug use and community health in the neighbourhood. 78 people responded to an informal survey.

- 73% said they thought that supervised drug consumption sites should be opened in Ottawa.
- 86% of those who supported supervised consumption sites in Ottawa thought that a site should be located in the ByWard Market area.

It is clear from these observations that considerable support for supervised consumption sites exists in Ottawa.

Why Advocate for Safer Consumption Sites in Ottawa?

CSCS Ottawa was formed in response to an ongoing health crisis in our city.

The Toronto and Ottawa Supervised Consumption Assessment study (TOSCA, 2012) indicates that Ottawa has Ontario's highest rate of new HIV infection among injection drug users.

11% of people who inject drugs in Ottawa are infected with HIV, while 60% have contracted hepatitis C.

Thirty-six people died from drug overdose in our city in 2011 — deaths that could have been prevented with timely medical intervention.

Supervised consumption sites are a proven measure to reduce the harms associated with drug use.

In over sixty cities around the world, supervised consumption sites offer a safe and clean environment where people can use their own drugs under medical supervision.

Canada's first supervised injection site, Insite, has been operating since 2003 in downtown Vancouver. In that time, it has significantly decreased the spread of HIV and hepatitis C, while reducing overdose deaths in the area by 35%.

Local residents and businesses, as well as the Vancouver police, continue to praise Insite for reducing public disorder and crime.

On September 30, 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that Insite provides a life-saving service crucial to the well-being of its clients and beneficial to the broader community.

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled that people who use drugs have a right to access health care services, including supervised injection.

This landmark decision opened the door to the creation of other supervised drug consumption sites in cities across the country.

Opening supervised drug consumption sites in Ottawa would:

- Reduce the spread of HIV and hepatitis-C by providing sterile equipment and safe disposal for used needles and pipes;
- Prevent deaths caused by overdose;
- Decrease public drug use and reduce drug-equipment litter; and
- Provide access to health and social services, such as first aid treatment and referral to addiction recovery programs.

Residential Canvassing Campaign

On April 27 and 28, 2013, volunteers with the Campaign for Safer Consumption Sites canvassed door-to-door among residences in Ottawa's Lowertown neighbourhood.

Residents were asked six questions regarding drug use in the city and their opinions on supervised drug consumption sites.

Volunteers also provided information about existing conditions in Ottawa, explained the potential benefits of a site, and answered questions.

115 people were interviewed in total.

Question 1

Do you think that public drug use is a problem in the neighbourhood?

- 62% of respondents said yes.
- 26% of respondents said no.

In 2011, over 6,300 needles and 1,200 crack pipes were recovered from city streets and parks.

Question 2

Do you think that drug use is an important health issue in Ottawa?

- 82% of respondents said yes.
- 6% of respondents said no.

The rate of HIV infection among drug users is twice as high in Ottawa as it is in Toronto.

Question 3

Have you heard of supervised drug consumption sites before?

- 78% of respondents said yes.
- 15% of respondents said no.

Question 4

Do you think that getting drug use off the street and connecting people who use drugs with health and social services are goals that we should be trying to achieve in Ottawa?

- 77% of respondents said yes.
- 7% of respondents said no.

A key objective of supervised consumption sites is to connect drug users with health and social services such as addiction treatment.

Question 5

Do you think that a supervised drug consumption site should be opened in Ottawa?

- 77% of respondents said yes.
- 14% of respondents said no.

Only 1 in 7 residents were opposed to the idea of supervised consumption sites in Ottawa.

Question 6

Do you support the opening of a supervised consumption site in this neighbourhood?

- 61% of respondents said yes.
- 20% of respondents said no.

80% of those who believed supervised consumption sites should be opened in Ottawa supported a site in their own neighbourhood.

Data collected

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Yes	71	94	90	89	88	70
No	30	7	17	8	16	23
Maybe	6	2	0	3	3	7
Don't know	8	12	8	15	8	15

Business Canvassing Campaign

During the week of July 15-21, 2013, CSCS volunteers approached businesses in the ByWard Market area with six questions concerning drug use in the community and their views on supervised drug consumption sites.

Canvassers visited door-to-door to retail shops, restaurants, bars, and other businesses open to the public.

They also provided statistics on the prevailing conditions in Ottawa, offered facts about the benefits found at Insite, and responded to questions.

Owners, managers, or senior staff members at a total of 78 establishments agreed to answer the survey.

Question 1

Do you think that public drug use is a concern in the neighbourhood?

- 83% of respondents said yes.
- 8% of respondents said no.

Reports of public drug use in the ByWard Market increased tenfold from 2010 to 2011.

Question 2

Has your business ever been affected by public drug use?

- 53% of respondents said yes.
- 46% of respondents said no.

Question 3

Do you think that drug use is an important health issue in Ottawa?

- 91% of respondents said yes.
- 3% of respondents said no.

On average, someone dies from drug overdose every ten days in Ottawa.

Question 4

Have you heard of supervised consumption sites before?

- 73% of respondents said yes.
- 27% of respondents said no.

Question 5

Do you think that supervised drug consumption sites should be opened in Ottawa?

- 73% of respondents said yes.
- 8% of respondents said no.

Question 6

Do you support the opening of a supervised consumption site in this neighbourhood?

- 63% of respondents said yes.
- 27% of respondents said no.

86% of those who supported supervised consumption sites in Ottawa thought that a site should be located in the ByWard Market area.

Data collected

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Yes	65	41	71	57	57	49
No	6	36	2	21	6	21
Maybe	2	1	1	0	9	3
Don't know	5	0	4	0	6	5

Conclusion

The results of the residential and business canvassing undertaken by CSCS Ottawa are clear.

Although only an informal survey of the attitudes of people in the community, these campaigns have revealed that far more support for supervised consumption sites exists in Ottawa than may have previously been thought.

In dozens of conversations, residents and businesses in Lowertown and the ByWard Market expressed their belief that drug use is an important health and safety issue in their community.

The vast majority of people asked believe that there is a need for supervised consumption sites in Ottawa — to address the epidemic of HIV and hepatitis C facing drug users, prevent overdose deaths, and get drug use off the street.

The right to adequate health care for drug users has been affirmed by the Supreme Court. People who use drugs in Ottawa are calling for these services to meet their health care needs.

These results demonstrate that people who live and work in a neighbourhood affected by problematic drug use support the creation of supervised consumption facilities.

It's time to heed the call from the community and take action to establish supervised drug consumption sites in Ottawa.



I support
community
health.

CSCS
OTTAWA

CAMPAIGN FOR
SAFER CONSUMPTION
SITES IN OTTAWA

Visit us online at cscsottawa.ca

CSCS
OTTAWA

CAMPAIGN FOR
SAFER CONSUMPTION
SITES IN OTTAWA



@CSCSOttawa



facebook.com/cscsottawa

Sources for data presented in this report can be found at cscsottawa.ca/facts.