

September 29, 2017

Dr. Isra G. Levy  
Medical Officer of Health  
Ottawa Public Health

Dear Dr. Levy,

We recognize and value the critical work that Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and Overdose Prevention Ottawa (OPO) have been doing, and continue to do, to provide supervised injection services during the present opioid crisis. As you know, nearly 2500 Canadians died in 2016 due to overdose-related causes and the year-to-date statistics are equally staggering.

With this week's opening of the interim site on Clarence Street operated by OPH, as well as pending applications for permanent supervised injection services by Sandy Hill Community Health Centre (CHC), Inner City Health and Somerset West CHC, we are hopeful that Ottawa is on track to be able to provide a more comprehensive and effective harm reduction strategy for drug users in our city.

We believe that what is needed now is a Supervised Injection Transition Plan. OPO has been clear that as a volunteer-run, temporary, treatment facility, there is a need to ensure that drug users can easily access permanent sites, a goal that all the involved public health stakeholders share. A Transition Plan would be an opportunity to identify benchmarks, timelines, operating modalities and other details to allow all parties to work towards this shared goal.

We are respectfully requesting that you establish, under your leadership, a working group which includes health professionals representing OPO, Ottawa Public Health, Sandy Hill CHC, Inner City Health, Somerset West CHC, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network and other engaged stakeholders as you deem appropriate. Once established, we suggest the group aim to develop the Transition Plan to both address gaps in service and to minimize the risk of overdose death as well as provide an agreed schedule to facilitate the shift towards permanent sites. Ideally, such a Plan could be developed within a 30-day timeframe.

We are grateful for the steps you have taken related to harm reduction strategies to date and are hopeful the proposed Working Group could contribute to a collaborative, cooperative response to this continuing public health crisis.

Sincerely,



Tobi Nussbaum



Catherine McKenney



Jeff Leiper



Diane Deans

Cc Shad Qadri, Chair, Ottawa Board of Health  
Jim Watson, Mayor, City of Ottawa