

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Supervised Consumption Services at Queen West

Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, 168 Bathurst Street



*“Integrated SCS at Queen West will be a life-saving addition to our harm reduction services. We see SCS as a much needed public health response to an individual and public health concern. We look forward to working with the clients and our communities in the implementation of this valuable service.”*

*- Angela Robertson, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, Executive Director*

### **What is Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre**

Parkdale Queen West CHC (PQWCHC) is an accredited community-based health and wellness service governed by a Board of Directors and serving the south-west Toronto. We are one of 73 Community Health Centers (CHCs) across Ontario, all of which have inter-professional teams of service providers including physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers/counsellors, health promoters and community workers. PQWCHC was formed in April 2017 through the successful merger of Queen West – Central Toronto CHC and Parkdale CHC, combined we have over 70 years of experience providing care to our communities. Our mission is to provide equitable, accessible urban healthcare for people where, when and how they need it. We offer a broad range of services, including primary health care, dental care, harm reduction, health promotion, counselling, and community development programming. We provide services at three main clinic locations, as well as within the community.

### **What services are provided at Queen West site?**

Queen West offers a broad range of services including medical and dental care, health promotion, counselling and mental health supports, HIV and Hepatitis C supports, treatment and education, anonymous HIV testing, wellness groups, practical supports (ID clinic, Voicemails, etc.), harm reduction including needle, stem kit and naloxone distribution, and illness prevention, advocacy, and community engagement and development. In addition, we provide referrals to a range of services and supports, such as housing and drug treatment.

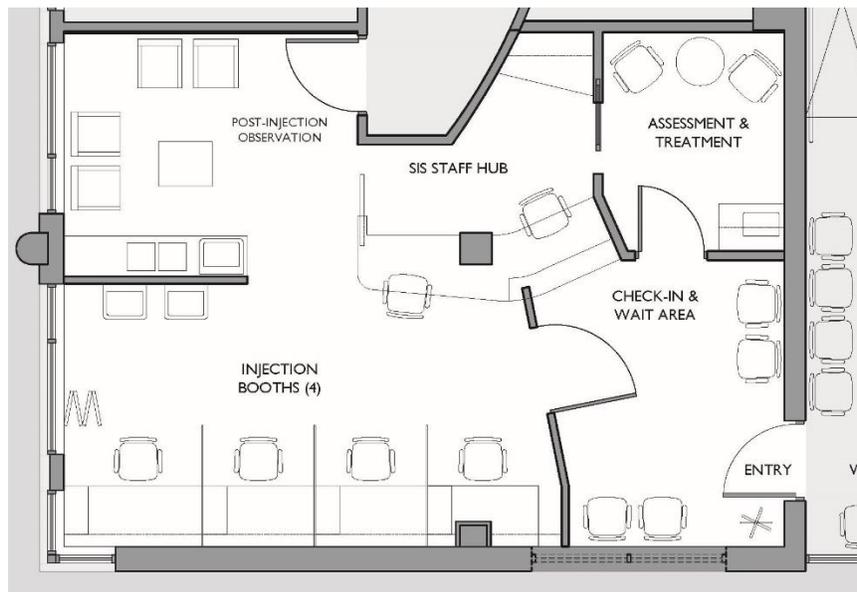
### **What is a supervised consumption service?**

Supervised consumption services are health services that provide a safer and hygienic environment for people to inject pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of staff. In addition to supervised injection, individuals are provided with sterile injection supplies, education on safer injection, overdose prevention and intervention, medical and counselling services, and referrals to drug treatment, housing, income support and other services.

## What is the new service being proposed at Queen West site?

Queen West site has added a small-scale supervised consumption service to its existing harm reduction and health services for people who inject drugs. The service is located on the ground floor within the agency's existing program space. The space for the service includes a dedicated wait area, an intake/reception desk, assessment/treatment room, an injection/consumption room with 4 supervised injection booths and an adjoining post-injection/consumption room (our chillout lounge). The service will be staffed by a nurse, counsellor and a harm reduction peer worker with a manager for oversight. Most of the people using the service will be existing clients.

### SCS Floor Plan



## When will the SCS be open?

The service will be opening on Friday, March 16, 2018. The hours for the month of March will be Monday – Thursday 1pm to 6pm; and Fridays 11am to 4pm. Last call is one hour before closing. In April, we will be expanding the SCS hours of operation to match those of our current health centre hours.

## Why is a supervised consumption service needed at Queen West?

Queen West has been delivering harm reduction in the community for over 20 years. Queen West is one of the busiest needle distribution programs in Toronto. In 2015, we had over 15,000 client visits and distributed almost 300,000 needles. We serve a significant number of people who inject drugs, including people who lack stable housing and engage in high-risk behaviours such as injecting alone, frequently, and in public.

Compared to the City overall, there are disproportionately high numbers of people who inject drugs within their catchment area, as well as higher rates of emergency department visits due to drug use in Toronto.<sup>1</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> Supplemental data based on the TOSCA Study, provided as a personal communication, May 2014, by A. Bayoumi. Derived using geographic data for the years 2004-2008, using multiple administrative health databases including: National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, Discharge Abstract Database, Ontario Public Drugs Benefit Program, and physician billing claims.

2012 study of Queen West harm reduction clients found that 11% had experienced an overdose (in the past 6 months), over a third reported public injecting, 15% said that they inject in public most often, almost a third reported injecting every day, and 29% reported regularly (from one to three or more times a week), 42.5% had evidence of a current/past infection with hepatitis C and 51% did not have stable housing<sup>2</sup>. Queen West clients who participated in studies told researchers and us that they wanted and would use an integrated supervised consumption service.

### **Is this the only neighbourhood where a supervised consumption service is being planned?**

There are now three other agencies in Toronto that are already offering supervised consumption to their existing health services for people who inject drugs: Toronto Public Health-The Works (277 Victoria St), South Riverdale Community Health Centre (955 Queen St East) and Fred Victor Centre (145 Queen St East). The Toronto Harm Reduction Alliance is currently operating an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS are similar to SCS but with fewer resources and without Health Canada oversight) staffed by volunteers and run out of tents in Moss Park at Queen & Sherbourne. Many more Overdose Prevention Sites are planned for Toronto. Multiple, small-scale services are needed because drug use is spread out in Toronto and because research has shown that people will not travel very far to use a supervised consumption service.

### **Will the supervised consumption service increase crime or drug use in our neighbourhood?**

Supervised consumption services do not contribute to more crime nor do they encourage increased drug use, initiate new users or increase public order problems by increasing local drug scenes or attracting drug users/dealers from other areas.<sup>3</sup> In fact, studies of the impact of this type of service find that occurrences of things like thefts, vehicle break-ins, discarded needles and drug use in public spaces tend to decrease after they are established. Research in Toronto that has examined the connection between supportive housing programs (which included housing for people who use substances) and property values has found that property values actually increase, along with a reduction in crime.<sup>4</sup>

We are deeply committed to maintaining a safe environment for our community, staff and clients and will continue to strengthen our current strategies in order to address safety considerations for our community, staff and clients. Strategies include (but are not limited to):

- Zero-tolerance drug trafficking protocol
- Engaging our community stakeholders via our SCS Community Liaison Committee
- Having a designated SCS Contact Person (i.e. SCS manager)
- SCS service delivery/design provisions (i.e. dedicated wait area and post-injection/consumption room)
- Regular monitoring of the street outside our Centre (by staff and mounted security cameras)
- Scheduling extra client support workers during the summer and evening hours
- Providing comprehensive and responsive services and supports to clients in need, including crisis intervention, stabilization supports, and community outreach
- Working with local community police officers, participating in 14 Division's Community Police Liaison Committee and establishing protocols with Toronto Police Services

### **What are the benefits to these services?**

International and Canadian research shows that supervised consumption services have benefits both for individuals using the services and for the community, including:

---

<sup>2</sup> Challacombe L and Millson P. 2012. Toronto I-Track Report. Queen West Central Toronto Community Health Centre Site Report. Public Health Agency of Canada, March 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Supervised Injection Services Toolkit, Toronto Drug Strategy June 2013 (appendix A)

<sup>4</sup> De Wolff, A. (2008). We are Neighbours: The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community, Social, Economic and Attitude Changes. Wellesley Institute: Toronto.

- Reducing the number of drug overdoses and deaths;
- Reducing risk factors leading to infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis;
- Increasing the use of detox and drug treatment services;
- Connecting people with other health and social services;
- Reducing the amount of publicly discarded needles;
- Not contributing to crime or increased drug use in the local community.

### **What has been the process for establishing this service?**

We have been planning and gathering input on this service for many years. In 2016, extensive consultations took place with local residents, businesses, people who use drugs, schools, churches and other community groups. Overall, the majority of people consulted regarding the addition of an SCS site at PQWCHC recognized the benefits of such a service.<sup>5</sup> In July 2016, the Board of Health voted unanimously to support SCS implementation in Toronto. In July 2016, Toronto City Council approved the three permanent facilities at the 3 proposed locations (Dundas Square, Queen/Bathurst and our site at Queen/Carlaw). On December 2016, we submitted our application to Health Canada to request an exemption from the Controlled Drugs & Substances Act which is required to operate this service without fear of arrest. We received approval from the federal government in June 2017. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has provided financial support for SCS in Toronto. On March 5, Health Canada informed PQWCHC that it has fulfilled all of the requirements and passed the inspection required to operate a supervised consumption service at the Queen West site under exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA).

### **Is there an opportunity for community input?**

Engaging with the local community and providing opportunities to raise any issues or concerns has always been important to PQWCHC. We have created a Community Liaison Committee with diverse community representation, so we can work together to resolve any concerns that may arise. In addition, our SCS manager is available to respond to community members' concerns and questions. The Centre will also regularly reach out and engage the community in a planned and thoughtful way to ensure they are provided with updates and that concerns are addressed quickly.

### **Evaluation and data collection**

In partnership with the Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation at St. Michael's Hospital, PQWCHC will participate in a coordinated, three-year evaluation with Toronto Public Health/The Works and South Riverdale Community Health Centre. The evaluation will help identify any issues or ongoing concerns and recommend ways to address them.

Monitoring data on patterns of use of the site, drugs being injected, impacts of the service in the community, demographic data of service users, referrals and the uptake of other Centre services will be collected and analyzed.

### **Where can I get more information about the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre's SCS?**

If you would like more information or have questions, please contact: Lorraine Barnaby, Supervised Consumption Service Manager ([lbarnaby@ctchc.com](mailto:lbarnaby@ctchc.com)), 416-703-8482 ext. 2333 or Anne Marie DiCenso, Director of Urban Health at 416-703-8482. They would be happy to speak to with you, give you a tour or to come meet with your group. Please visit our website for more information about our Centre and our SCS: [www.ctchc.com](http://www.ctchc.com)

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.masslbp.com/journal/sis>