

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT FOR A SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITE IN BARRIE

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Harm Reduction Pillar of the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) agreed to explore an application for a Supervised Consumption Site (SCS). The Canadian Mental Health Association Simcoe County (CMHA), the Gilbert Centre, and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) are leading this work. An important part of the application process is to hold community consultations to gather stakeholder perspectives on an SCS for Barrie. These stakeholders include people with lived experience (PWLE) of drug use, community partners, and the general public, specifically those who work, live or go to school in Barrie.

Based on the way the data was collected the results represent the perspectives of the respondents only, and do not represent the entire Barrie community.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 2,039 people who live, work, or go to school in Barrie, 47 people with lived experience of drug use, and 24 community partners participated in the community consultations.
- The majority of general public respondents (98.3%) and 76.6% of respondents with lived experience know or have heard of Supervised Consumption Sites (SCSs).
- All community partners believe that there is a problem with drug use in Barrie — that there is an increase in drug use, and more availability of tainted and dangerous drugs.

Potential Benefits of a Supervised Consumption Site in Barrie

- Almost half of general public respondents (49.2%) think that a SCS in Barrie will be helpful. The top three benefits of having SCS in Barrie as identified by these respondents include:
 - reduce drug use in public (91.0%)
 - reduce risk of injury and death from drug overdose (89.5%)
 - reduce the number of used needles on the streets and in parks (88.8%)
- The top three benefits for people who use drugs, as identified by respondents with lived experience, include:
 - help lower the risk of injury and death from drug overdose (83.0%)
 - help lower the risk of developing diseases such as HIV, and Hepatitis C (57.4%)
 - help increase the use of new drug-related equipment for each injection (57.4%)
- The top three benefits for clients of an SCS, as identified by community partner respondents, include:

- act as a bridge to other services and connect clients to additional services and supports
- save lives and extend an individual's life
- create a safe and supportive environment for a client

Concerns about a Supervised Consumption Site in Barrie

- Nearly two out of three general public respondents (63.4%) had concerns about having an SCS in Barrie. Their top three concerns include:
 - encouraging more drug use (74.4%)
 - more people who use drugs would be in the neighbourhood (73.1%)
 - safety of community members (69.8%)
- The top three negative impacts of an SCS in Barrie to the community, as identified by community partner respondents, include:
 - increase in crime, drug trafficking and drug use
 - negative perception and rejection from the community of having an SCS in Barrie
 - increase in vulnerable populations in the community i.e. groups at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political and environmental resources.

Preventative Strategies to Address Community Concerns

- The top three preventative strategies to address the concerns above, as identified by general public respondents, include:
 - evaluate SCS services to see what is working and what is not and share the results with the community to take action (43.3%)
 - increase security in the area of an SCS (40.7%)
 - increase clean-up of publicly discarded needles (32.9%)
- The top three preventative strategies to address the concerns above, as identified by community partner respondents, include:
 - ongoing communication with the community, and continued consultations with the community possibly through a committee
 - having an SCS in an appropriate location, with appropriate staff and services available to potential clients
 - community partners working together for success of an SCS in Barrie

Perceived Outcomes of a Supervised Consumption Site in Barrie

- The top three situations respondents with lived experience think are most likely to occur in the community if an SCS were opened in Barrie include:

- people who use drugs could have their questions answered about drug treatment (97.9%)
- less chance of drug-related equipment being reused (93.6%)
- decreased amount of used equipment found on the streets (91.5%)

Service Delivery Model

- The majority of respondents with lived experience (97.9%) indicated that if an SCS was available in Barrie, people who use drugs would use it.
- The top three reasons people who use drugs would be encouraged to come to an SCS include:
 - to prevent overdoses (74.5%)
 - to treat overdoses (57.4%)
 - to be safe from being seen by police (55.3%)
- The top three reasons that would prevent people who use drugs from coming to an SCS include:
 - fear of being caught with drugs by police (80.0%)
 - worried about the presence of security and police around the SCS (60.0%)
 - they don't want to be seen (53.3%)

Mitigation Strategies

The results from the community consultations were used to develop mitigation strategies which will be included in the application. These strategies are meant to address the concerns identified during the consultations, which include:

- community and client safety
- site selection
- ongoing community engagement
- access to wrap-around community services
- education and awareness

[The full report is also available.](#)