

Supervised Consumption Sites – Frequently Asked Questions

March 2021

What are supervised consumption sites (SCS?)

Supervised consumption sites help save lives and build safer communities. They provide a safe and clean space for people to use their own drugs under the care of health staff. They offer services that connect clients to doctors, treatment and other health and social services. Health Canada uses the term SCS for their application process. The Ontario Ministry of Health refers to SCS as consumption and treatment services (CTS). For more information on SCS and the application process to date, please visit <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Drugs/opioids/Supervised-consumption-sites>

Why are additional sites being added and others being removed

The two applicants for the proposed SCS, the Canadian Mental Health Association Simcoe County Branch (lead applicant) and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (co-applicant), had decided – with the guidance and support of the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee - to move forward with community consultations on two proposed locations in Ward 2 of Barrie. The two locations were 31 Toronto Street (the building in the back of the lot) and 110 Dunlop Street West, Unit 4. The two sites had been chosen based on Ministry of Health criteria for consumption and treatment services as well as expanded criteria developed by the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee. Upon consideration of feedback received from the consultation process to date, including the online community survey conducted in October to November 2020, engagement with Barrie City Council members during small group sessions in December 2020 and January 2021, and feedback from other community stakeholders, the Advisory Committee decided to expand the search for additional potential sites to add to the existing options. The expanded search map can be viewed on the SCS Site Selection Advisory committee webpage: <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Drugs/opioids/Supervised-consumption-sites/Site-Selection-Advisory-Committee>.

After an assessment of the additional options that arose through this expanded search, and careful consideration of the physical requirements for the site, we will proceed with neighbourhood consultations on the following four addresses: 110 Dunlop St. W unit 4, 11 Sophia St W., 80 Bradford St. unit 940 (legal address, 19 Innisfil St.), and 192 Bradford St. An online survey exploring benefits and concerns of the newly chosen site addresses, will be conducted between March 10 and March 31, 2021.

Upon further consideration and review of the 31 Toronto St site location, it was found to be the least viable in relation to the original and additional site options and therefore removed from the list.

Ultimately, only one site will be presented to Barrie City Council for endorsement to submit an SCS application. This site will be selected based on feedback from the entire community consultation process. For more information on the SCS site selection process and community consultations to date, as well as the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee meetings, visit- <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Drugs/opioids/Supervised-consumption-sites> and

<https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/Drugs/opioids/Supervised-consumption-sites/Site-Selection-Advisory-Committee>

How can I provide my feedback on these additional site options?

Engagement with the public is an important part of the process, during the application and beyond. An online survey on the initial site options, 31 Toronto St. and 110 Dunlop St W, unit 4 was completed during the month of October 2020, and a similar survey will be made available for the additional site options. This survey will be available to people who live, work or go to school in Barrie on the SMDHU website from March 10, 2021 – March 31 2021. Paper copies of this survey will be made available by calling 705-721-7520 ext. 7333 and leaving your name and mailing address. As an additional consultation opportunity, those who reside or own a business within 250 metres of the four proposed locations will also receive an invitation by mail encouraging participation in one of two virtual neighbourhood consultation sessions being held in April 2021.

It is recognized that the virtual platform for neighbourhood consultations, made necessary by the global pandemic, may impact access to these sessions for some individuals. Every effort will be made to work with partner agencies to mitigate this limitation and provide access to those individuals without the technology to do so themselves. Please remember, you can provide your input through the survey as well, which can be requested in hard copy by calling 705-721-7520 ext. 7333 and leaving your name and mailing address. Some community partner agencies will also have hard copies of the survey available.

When will the SCS open?

The supervised consumption site is not yet a certainty. Several steps must still be taken. After the community consultations are complete and the applicants have selected a site with the input of the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee, a presentation will be made to Barrie City Council to seek City Council endorsement of the chosen location. This is required for the provincial application. Following that, the application must be submitted to the federal government for exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to the provincial government for their approval for funding.

Why provide supervised consumption sites?

SCS are part of a harm reduction approach that aims to provide:

- Overdose response (i.e CPR, naloxone, oxygen);
- Harm reduction supplies including needles and other safer drug use equipment;
- Client education;
- Connection to a variety of services including: addictions treatment, primary care, mental health, housing and/or social supports.

What are the proven benefits of a SCS?

- They help prevent deaths and hospital visits due to drug overdose.

- They help reduce unsafe injection practices which can lead to the transmission of blood-borne infections.
- They increase uptake of addiction treatment & other health and social services.
- They are cost effective health care.
- They bring stability to the community by improving public order, through reducing the number of injections taking place on the street and the amount of publically discarded needles.

Do we need a site like this in Barrie?

- There were 94 confirmed and probable opioid-related deaths in Simcoe Muskoka in the first eight and a half months of 2020, which was 50% higher than the comparable average for the previous three years. The City of Barrie has been disproportionally impacted by this recent increase, with 47(or 50% of these deaths), despite accounting for 25% of the Simcoe Muskoka population.
- Barrie's opioid overdose emergency department visits from Jan-Dec 2019 had a crude rate of 182.2 per 100,000 pop. compared to Ontario's crude rate of 71.8 per 100,000 pop.

How will you address the concerns that come from these consultations?

The first step of addressing the concerns is to talk openly about what we know from the evidence of both our local situation but also the history of safe consumption services that exist in our country and internationally. We will engage with the community to gather feedback during the consultation process that will assist with the creation of mitigation strategies to address the concerns to the best of our ability. We are also required to summarize this within the application for the CTS and SCS. We will try to balance the need for a service that meets the needs of at risk members of our community who are using drugs, with the perspectives of the broader community.

Do supervised consumption sites encourage people to experiment with and use drugs?

SCS are designed for clients who already use drugs and who may have been using drugs for a long time. It is unlikely that people new to drug use, or experimenting with drugs, would use this site. However even for people who are new to using drugs it is safer to use in a supervised site, than alone.

Why are we not putting more effort into getting people to stop using drugs?

A SCS can be the first step into treatment for some people. People who are likely to use a SCS may struggle with poverty, homelessness, social isolation, employment, poor mental health, and trauma. A SCS is a health service where people who use drugs know they will be treated with respect. Staff in a SCS provide a human connection so that a trusting relationship can be developed. With trust, those who want to take steps out of addiction or receive other supports will feel safe enough to ask for help. In the meantime, they will have health care staff on hand who will respond if signs of overdose appear.

What are we doing to promote prevention and treatment?

Locally the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS), is taking a multi-pillar approach to address this complex issue. The pillars include prevention, harm reduction, treatment, enforcement and emergency management. The treatment pillar was involved in recent increases in local treatment options. In June 2018, Simcoe County's first of five Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinic locations opened in Barrie. These clinics serve people with substance use disorders and their families. The prevention pillar has been working with community partners to hold educational events, share resources, provide support to local school boards and collaborate on the implementation of evidence-based initiatives that address the root causes of opioid use.

Will the site increase crime and drug use?

High quality reviews of evidence from SCSs operating elsewhere in Canada and internationally have shown that they:

- Have no impact on crime;
- Improve public order & safety;
- Reduce the presence of discarded needles and drug paraphernalia;
- Reduce overdose-related harms;
- Have no impact on community drug use patterns.

While there have been community reports of challenges at some SCSs, it is important to understand the range of perspectives around an SCS and the various factors that help SCSs make a positive contribution to the surrounding community. Learnings from elsewhere are being integrated into the planning for an SCS for Barrie.

Are SCS working effectively in other parts of Ontario?

Yes, there is recent evidence from Ontario, including sites run in Ottawa, London, Guelph, and Toronto. This recent evidence shows that the sites are:

- Responding to overdoses and saving lives;
- Connecting people to treatment, providing education and referrals to health and social services;
- Improving community safety and reducing public drug use.