

For Immediate Release | January 15, 2016

Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation granted exemption for integrated supervised injection service

Vancouver, BC – The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation and Vancouver Coastal Health are delighted that Health Canada has granted the Dr. Peter Centre an exemption under federal law to continue to provide supervised injection services.

The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation has received a section 56 exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA), for two years, which ensures the centre's nurses and clients will not be charged under federal drug laws for their activities related to providing and accessing supervised injection services.

"This is excellent news for public health and safety in Vancouver," said Health Minister Terry Lake. "The evidence is clear – supervised injection services prevent overdose deaths and save lives. They have become a valued part of health services in Vancouver and are an important part of our response to substance use and addiction. We continue to support supervised injection along with other harm reduction services."

In partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation operates the Dr. Peter Centre, an internationally recognized health care facility located in Vancouver that cares for people living with HIV who also have complex health and social issues, including mental illness and addictions. The Dr. Peter Centre integrated nurse-supervised injection service into its range of health care services in 2002.

"This announcement is a significant step forward for Canadian health care," said Maxine Davis, executive director, Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation. "The Government of Canada has recognized that supervised injection reduces the harms of drug use for people who are actively addicted to injectable drugs."

"The Dr. Peter Centre has been sharing with others its model of integrating supervised injection into an existing health care centre. The model opens up new possibilities for making the service more widely available," Davis said.

Incorporating supervised injection into nursing care at the Dr. Peter Centre helps prevent infections, overdose deaths and the spread of disease such as hepatitis C, while at the same time engaging vulnerable people in effective HIV treatment. Stable access to supervised injection is especially critical given the steadily increasing rates of opioid overdoses and the presence of fentanyl in the illicit drug market in Vancouver and throughout B.C.

"Overdose deaths in Vancouver are on the rise and supervised injection services, like those provided at the Dr. Peter Centre and Insite, are needed now more than ever," said Dr. Patricia Daly, Chief Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health. "Health Canada's approval of this exemption application paves the way for us to explore additional opportunities for incorporating supervised injection into existing health care services for those suffering from addiction."

VCH is responsible for the delivery of \$3.4 billion in community, hospital and residential care to more than one million people in communities including Richmond, Vancouver,

the North Shore, Sunshine Coast, Sea to Sky corridor, Powell River, Bella Bella and Bella Coola.

The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation, with funding from VCH, BC Housing, and donors, operates the Dr. Peter Centre, which provides compassionate HIV care to people living with complex health and social issues including mental illness, addictions, poverty and homelessness. The Centre uses an integrated model to engage individuals in their health care with a specific goal of improved adherence to HIV treatment and overall improved health.

Media availability: Maxine Davis will be available to speak to media today at 11 a.m. at 1110 Comox Street, Vancouver.

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