

Alberta's Decision to Close Supervised Consumption Sites Will Result in Needless Death

As organizations working to advance policies grounded in human rights and public health, HIV Legal Network and the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition strongly condemn the decision by the Government of Alberta to close the last remaining supervised consumption sites in Calgary and Lethbridge and urge its immediate reversal. If left to proceed, this policy decision will result in needless deaths of loved ones, increased rates of preventable injury and transmission of HIV and Hepatitis C, increased strain on overburdened emergency services, and increased drug consumption and debris in public spaces.

The evidence on these issues has been well-established for decades. We note that the Alberta government is attempting to support its decision with its own [flawed six-month study](#) that contradicts the overwhelming evidence demonstrating the harmful impacts on communities when a site closes. In [Ontario](#), supervised consumption site closures have been associated with several harms over the past year, including sharp increases in EMS-treated opioid toxicities (+69.5%) and in emergency department visits for opioid toxicities (+67%), as well as an increase of deaths in private residences and outdoor settings.

As experts in drug policy, we emphasize that the rate of toxic drug deaths is directly impacted by the composition and volatility of the unregulated drug supply, which is currently outside of the oversight and control of any regulatory body. Shockingly, the Government of Alberta says now is the time to close these sites because overdose deaths have dropped [“about 39 per cent”](#) since a peak in 2023. But 602 people lost their lives in only six months in 2025. We are still in the midst of a toxic drug crisis, and supervised consumption sites are crucial to reducing overdose deaths. Eliminating a critical, evidence-based overdose prevention tool defies all logic.

The supervised consumption site in Calgary alone [responded to 475 drug-related events](#) in the first three quarters of 2025. To be clear, these numbers represent lives that would have been lost without the availability of supervised consumption services.

People who use drugs in Calgary and Lethbridge will lose a lifeline when these sites close in June 2026. Removing access to one of the most evidence-based, proven tools available to reduce preventable drug-related deaths and injuries is a reckless choice

with clear consequences: more needless suffering. In the context of the volatile, toxic, unregulated drug supply, supervised consumption services are an essential element of a broader approach that includes access to voluntary, regulated, evidence-based substance use treatment. Increased investments in abstinence-based treatment services do not replace the unique and life-saving service provided by supervised consumption. It is well established that working towards abstinence, for those that choose to do so, is not a linear process. For example, the increased risk of life-threatening overdose following substance use treatment is well-documented. By ensuring the availability of a range of evidence-informed services, including supervised consumption, we are better able to support people and reduce preventable deaths. Harm reduction and access to voluntary treatment services go hand in hand.

We stand in solidarity with people who use drugs and their families, as well as frontline workers who will bear the brunt of harm from this policy decision. We are committed to working with allies in Alberta to advance substance use policy that is grounded in evidence and creates safer, healthier communities for every member of our society, regardless of their relationship to substance use.

The HIV Legal Network and Canadian Drug Policy Coalition call on the Government of Alberta to immediately reverse this decision.