



Harm Reduction
Nurses Association

Association des
infirmiers et infirmières
en réduction des méfaits

OPEN LETTER TO THE SASKATCHEWAN PREMIER, MINISTER OF HEALTH, AND MINISTER OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

2024-01-21

Hon. Scott Moe

Premier of Saskatchewan

premier@gov.sk.ca

Hon. Everett Hindley

Minister of Health

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Hon. Tim McLeod

Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

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The [Harm Reduction Nurses Association](#) is deeply concerned over the Saskatchewan government's recent [decision](#) to reduce public access to harm reduction by restricting the distribution of safer drug use supplies. As a national voice for nurses serving communities of people who use drugs, we are obligated to speak up against policies that will harm public health.

Sterile supply distribution is vital to protecting communities and a well-established and evidence-based public health intervention. The data support this practice: jurisdictions which require one-for-one needle exchange have higher rates of [blood borne infections](#) with no reduction in [needle debris](#). Saskatchewan already has the [highest rate](#) of HIV infections in Canada: while the rate of [new diagnoses](#) in Canada is 4.7 per 100,000 people, in Saskatchewan the rate is 19.0 per 100,000 people. By discouraging safer use, Saskatchewan will set itself even farther apart from other jurisdictions in Canada who invest in comprehensive, evidence-based public health strategies.

Saskatchewan's announcement is just one of many recent government efforts to defund and dismantle harm reduction services. Such policies abandon scientifically-proven practices which not only reduce harm for people who use drugs, but reduce costs. Sterile drug use supplies are [cheap](#); new HIV and Hepatitis C infections are [expensive](#). Governments, who are responsible for public health, should invest in every intervention that is proven to prevent disease and reduce the strain on our health care system. Provinces who have moved away from harm reduction interventions for political reasons have seen [increased overdoses](#) and [increased death](#).



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Nurses know the harms of regressive policy. We anticipate that this policy will result in increased disease transmission, infected wounds, more stigma, higher health care costs, and death. We know that everyone is deserving of health care and that the harms experienced by one individual can be felt by entire communities. We call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately:

- 1. Rescind the decision to limit access to safer inhalation supplies and sterile needles**
- 2. Commit to the ongoing funding and support of harm reduction services across the province**

There is no evidence to support Saskatchewan's decades-long backstep in public policy. This policy change helps no one and will harm many. We urge you to reconsider your actions.

Sincerely,

The Harm Reduction Nurses Association

cc Hon. Carla Beck, Leader of the Opposition
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cc Andrew Will, Chief Executive Officer, Saskatchewan Health Authority
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