

# The hypocrisy of Insite's support

**Let me tell you how I spent most of the last week.**

Usually, I receive between 50 and 100 e-mails from any of you per week. I answer them all myself, no formula retort, no anemic efforts at a perfunctory response. The vast majority of my readers (approximately 95 per cent) are supportive, lucid and cogent in their comments. But no issue I have ever addressed for you, including abortion, the death penalty, immigration or even the gross commercialization of Valentine's Day, has ever garnered such malicious responses.

In the seven days since I wrote that Insite was a bust without the three other pillars (prevention, enforcement and particularly treatment), I have received seven pieces of negative mail and one long rambling letter from someone who was clearly a first time user, but found a pen in the lane: The vitriol was shrill, and, predictably, incomprehensible. There were those who were kind and stayed to their point: Two. Total number of e-mails/letters/feedback: 194.

That means 187 responses agreeing that Insite, in its current form, is of no real measurable value, tax dollars shouldn't be used on addicts as guinea pigs and Health Minister Tony Clement understands this and he and the Conservative government of this country are willing to posit that real compassion is treatment.

Expediently unaddressed by the objectors to my thesis, were questions as to why Onsite, a "pre-tox" facility, is housed 15 feet away from where addicts shoot up at Insite (a trigger). Or why in the over half a decade since Insite has been open, not one of the dozen or so harm reduction disciples have lobbied for treatment centres, never mind just extra beds (and this they discovered only recently).

Not a letter to any government by any of them asking for more police, not one call for additional programs in schools. Nothing.



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**REBEL WITH A CLAUSE**

Instead, Mark Townsend of the Portland Hotel Society, landlords of Insite, took to the airwaves on the Bill Good Show this week, and gave a virtuoso performance: Insite is essentially the greatest construct

since sliced bread and critics are political hacks and uninformed. He never addressed the top addictionologists in this province being against the current form of Insite and never talked about how it takes you no less than two weeks just to get into a detox bed in Vancouver. Instead, he filled Bill the Good's studio, with, as my Jewish friends say, schlock. This is the same Mark Townsend who recently called the office of one of the top addiction specialists in B.C. and dropped F-bombs and spewed unearthly venom, because the good doctor was highly critical of the harm reductionists in an interview with the *Globe and Mail*.

I am not against a facility that promotes the better health and, in fact, the cure (for lack of a better word) of an addict. I am simply against the one-pillar approach. If the other three pillars had been operating from the outset, there would be no need for a debate now. The Tories wouldn't have any gripe with the current waste of time and money at Insite, and at least 187 of you would be as silent on this issue as I would, because treatment works better than any other harm reduction model. In fact, Minister Clement himself has named treatment as being key.

He also mentioned in a majority of countries where harm reduction was attempted, they have reverted to forced treatment and jailing dealers – for a long time. Again, this is nothing you will hear from the local proponents of Insite, because, to steal a phrase, it's an 'inconvenient truth.'

Frankly, what this issue brings to light, more so, is the alarming, ferocious hypocrisy of the intemperate harm reduction lobby.

Nothing else.

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