

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 19-A-069, **Version:** 2

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### **DEPUTATIONS REGARDING MOTION 19-G-168, PROPOSED SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITE LOCATION - 90 MULCASTER STREET**

1. John Alousis from Alousis Law, advised that he feels there are several issues associated with the proposed location for the Supervised Consumption Site (SCS) at 90 Mulcaster Street. He noted that his law firm is located in the downtown in close proximity to the proposed SCS site. Mr. Alousis discussed issues including homelessness, drug addiction and affordable housing in the City. He noted that he and his business partners have invested in commercial properties to help reinvigorate the downtown. He spoke about his personal experiences with a family member and their struggles with drug addiction.

Mr. Alousis commented on the City of Guelph's Overdose Prevention Site, and other SCS locations throughout Ontario. He noted he has met with concerned residents, and representatives from the David Busby Centre and the Canadian Mental Health Association concerning the proposed SCS location.

Mr. Alousis advised of his concerns with of matters he felt were misrepresented within the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) submission, such as the application not identifying the proposed location was less than 200 metres of a public park (Berzcy Street Park) and the Season Centre for Grieving Children, the results and numbers obtained from the public consultation, as well as SMOS not disclosing the site location during the public consultation process. Mr. Alousis discussed that he felt the City's Official Plan and Zoning By-laws are failing to address the current issues affecting the community. He referred to other municipalities taking the time to investigate, look at planning studies and policies in place before approving a SCS. Mr. Alousis described his observations of the current situation in the Downtown area, including the increase in crime, the issues associated with drugs and the safety concerns from the residents in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Alousis requested that members of Council not consider the 90 Mulcaster Street as the location due to the close proximity to the Barrie Courthouse, residential properties, and walking distance to the Downtown Public Library, parks and the Season Centre for Grieving Children.

Mr. Alousis suggested that more time be permitted to find the right location and that residents and property owners be involved in the decision of a site location. He also requested that proper planning and an implementation plan be in place to ensure that the services will benefit the City instead of harming it. Mr. Alousis advised that he is in favor of the SCS, but not in favour of the site location.

2. Liz Saul commented on General Committee's recommendation to support moving forward with the SCS. Ms. Saul advised that she felt there were flaws in the data presented to General Committee by the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) team, as there are families, schools and parks near the SCS. She discussed concerns with other potential locations that are not willing to host a consumption site. Ms. Saul noted that SMOS did not provide information associated with other locations to compare to. She indicated that she observed that members of Council only heard about the success stories of other municipalities. She questioned why the City has allowed the downtown to become a ghetto, and noted that she felt that by bringing the drug population and the vulnerable populations together this would create a very challenging and unsafe community.

Ms. Saul commented on Council's decisions to approve thousands of dollars into attracting more people into the downtown but noted she felt that they have not solved the issues that are here today. Ms. Saul commented on other municipalities that currently have SCS such as Vancouver, Edmonton and Toronto and noted that these municipalities continue to have issues with their SCS.

Ms. Saul noted that she felt that SMOS had presented inaccurate data from the public consultation process and noted her concerns that the survey conducted by SMOS was completed before the proposed site was announced. She referred to a petition with approximately 500 signatures in opposition to the proposed SCS location.

Ms. Saul commented on the SCS location in Guelph that was visited by members of Council. She noted that she felt that the site was not a fair comparison to the proposed site in Barrie, and that she felt that the site in Toronto would be a better comparison as it is attached to a homeless shelter similar to the David Busby Centre. She noted that the Toronto site still hasn't been able to figure out how to achieve peace within the community. Ms. Saul provided her personal experience with a family member and drug addiction. She commented that the reality of addiction is that people use where they live, work and play and they will only move on to Wellness when they are ready and not before.

Ms. Saul expressed her opinion that the proposed location where people are chronic users, will not help the community and noted that she felt that this model is flawed. She further noted that the SCS will not stop or slow the opioid crisis. Ms. Saul asked members of Council to turn down the proposal and suggested that SCS not be located in a residential neighborhood or in an established business area.

3. Barry Mills advised that he and his wife are in support of a safe consumption site in the City of Barrie. He noted that he was concerned about the public consultation process that was undertaken, as he felt that it was unfair to people who live and work near the proposed SCS. Mr. Mills described the reasons that he purchased his property, including the pride and peace in their neighbourhood and being close to enjoy the amenities downtown. He advised that in the recent years his neighbourhood has changed with the relocation of the David Busby Centre and two Halfway Housing to this the area. He indicated that this has resulted in substantial incidents such as horrible behavior on their street, people being camped out on the street, harassment, and ransack of cars.

Mr. Mills expressed his concerns associated with the proposed SCS being located beside the David Busby Centre noting that he felt that the public consultation process was flawed and inaccurate as the survey had no reference to an actual site location. He advised that SMOS provided a \$25 gift card as incentive for people to complete the survey. He noted that he felt that proper notification of the public consultation sessions was not provided. Mr. Mills suggested alternative locations for a SCS within the downtown, such as High Street and Simcoe Street and the possibly of another area to allow people to break away from their habits and the advantage of the facilities being dispersed throughout the City and not just in one location. He spoke about the new developments in the downtown area, and cautioned to whether or not people will want to move into these locations if there is concern for their safety. Mr. Mills noted that he felt that overtime the Downtown will be turned in slums by concentrating these types of services in one area by providing drug use from one generation to another.

4. Hollie Mann advised she is a member of the Barrie Downtown Community Coalition (BDCC) and was speaking on their behalf concerning their opposition to the proposed SMOS Plan for the SCS location at 90 Mulcaster Street. She advised that the organization is comprised of local residents and businesses within the downtown core for many years. Ms. Mann spoke about the potential of the Downtown including the recent revitalization of Barrie's Waterfront. Ms. Mann discussed the impacts resulting from rapid drug uses, and overdoses in the Downtown. She questioned the proposed strategy

in the planning of the safe consumption site and whether or not it will change the patterns of drug use and opioid use in Barrie. She provided background information related to the Toronto SCS, and the complaints from Toronto residents about increases crime, used needles and garbage on the Toronto streets. She detailed the current issues facing residents in the immediate neighborhood of the Busby Centre and noted that she felt that the SCS will only add to the current issues with no end in sight.

Ms. Mann referred to the City's Strategic Plan associated to protecting the community and properties of the residents and noted that she does not believe that this the site will coincide with this Plan and the need for a strong and vibrant Downtown. She urged members of Council to carefully consider the impact of the site on the surrounding neighborhoods, the Downtown and Barrie's Waterfront. Ms. Mann suggested that they not rush into a decision for a SCS as well as her thoughts associated with the three pillars of the SMOS.

5. Neil Little advised of his concerns associated to the General Committee's recommendation regarding the proposed SCS location at 90 Mulcaster Street. He discussed his frustration associated with the lack of notification for the Public Consultation Session held at Collier Street Church. He noted that he and his neighbours did not received any notices. Mr. Little highlighted his concerns as well as those of the neighbours adjacent to the Busby Street Centre including public safety during the day and especially at night and the estimated numbers of persons that will use the site. He also noted his concerns associated with people being released from the SCS under the influence of drugs, the unstable and dangerous situations that can arise from people under the influence of drugs and the impact that the SCS will have on the neighbourhood on top of the current issues the neighbours are experiencing from the Busby Street Centre. Mr. Little commented on his own personal experience with drug addiction within his families and noted that how scary and dangerous a situation can arise.

Mr. Little expressed that he is not against a SCS, but that he is against the process not being done properly and without the proper research to make a decision. He advised members of Council that he has done the research and he feels that locating the SCS next to the Busby Street Centre will not have a good outcome.

6. Drew Dekker advised that he cannot be in support of a proposed SCS location at 90 Mulcaster Street. He commented on the deficiency of the data, the feedback of the community and noted that he felt the survey was one-sided using a conservative population and the incentive of \$25 gift card to participants which could be considered as a sampling bias. Mr. Dekker discussed the importance of notification of public consultation and noted that on notice provided on May 1<sup>st</sup>, they had little time to access it and review its findings. He commented on the SMOS having too much uncertainty to have success with the SCS. Mr. Dekker suggested that Council delay for the decision to complete a further review including a housing strategy and further public consultation. He indicated that the Busby Street Centre needs to deal with its current issues before proposing a SCS is located in a neighborhood already being terrorized.

Mr. Dekker discussed the land uses surrounding the proposed SCS location, and he identified the most vulnerable involved such as the library, schools, parks which are all located within walking distance. He commented that he understood the concept to harm reduction to save lives but he believes that the SCS will create a larger problem. Mr. Dekker asked Council not to endorse the SMOS Plan and requested that proper research on a proposed site and that a site be chosen with less residential impact and after extensive public notification and consultation is undertaken.

7. Colby Marshall advised he has invested in several buildings on Peel Street over last five years, and commented on the processes and policies that the City follows and that he has a good working relationship with City staff. He advised that he did not received any notification from the City about the

Busby Centre. Mr. Marshall addressed his concerns about the SCS location including it being located next to the already overcrowded Busby Street Centre, the possibility of lower property values in the area and the safety of the residents in relation to incidents that have taken place at the Busby Street Centre. He noted that the SCS will only add to issues that the neighbourhood is currently having with the Busby Centre.

8. Kailey Stein commented on her experiences of growing up in the City of Barrie and living in the downtown area. She advised of her concerns about the downtown community including the lack of reliable positive leadership for the proposed SCS. Ms. Stein referred to several articles, and studies associated to drug addiction, the impacts and effectiveness of safe injection sites. Ms. Stein discussed the Barrie Public Library increase in security to discourage loitering, crime and illegal drug use and the increase in prostitution and drug activity in the downtown area. She indicated that citizens no longer feel safe using the amenities in the downtown area and that this should be a safe place for the community to enjoy.

Ms. Stein commented on her personal experiences with mental health disorders and the amazing therapy programs available in Toronto. Ms. Stein noted that she believes in fixing the issue and not putting a band-aid over the issue, and that the SCS will only be a band-aid for the opioid crisis. She asked members of Council to remember that families want to feel safe in the downtown and to listen to the public, that they do not want a SCS.

9. Rowley Ramey advised that he is the Managing Director and a co-founder of the Seasons Centre for Grieving Children and provided his own family experience from the effects of drug addiction and the core of what the Seasons Centre for Grieving Children is about.

Mr. Ramey discussed the value of a safe SCS, and the need to provide appropriate support and care for illicit drug users in an overtaxed community health care services. He advised of his concerns that there aren't enough studies to show the effects of establishing a SCS within neighbourhoods. He noted that he felt that there was a lack of notice or opportunity for the community to respond in an educated and informative way. He acknowledged the concerns of the residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods and noted that the main issue is whether or not this the right location or if is there a more suitable location. Mr. Ramey commented on the current proposed site servicing concerns, overcrowding of patrons that will spill into the streets, the negative effects on the surrounding community, the open amount of drug use and the limited resources of enforcement. Mr. Ramey noted that they have not received enough information to form a supportive or negative position about the site.

Mr. Ramey asked that an appropriate timeframe be established to allow vested residents, stakeholders, business and community partner to review, research, respond to the proposal of a Supervised Consumption Site and its location.

**Councillor J. Harris declared a potential pecuniary interest on the foregoing matter as he is an employee of the CMHA Ontario Division and has an immediate family member who works for CMHA Simcoe County (one of the SCS applicants) and owner of the proposed property. He did not participate in the discussion on the matter. He left the Council Chamber.**