

Legislation Text

File #: 21-A-062, Version: 2

DEPUTATIONS REGARDING MOTION 21-G-149, REVIEW OF PROPOSED SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITE LOCATIONS

Councillor J. Harris declared a potential pecuniary interest on the foregoing matter as he has a family member who works for the CMHA Simcoe County Branch. He did not participate in the discussions or vote on the foregoing matter. He left the virtual General Committee meeting.

The following individuals provided Deputations regarding motion 21-G-149, Review of Proposed Supervised Consumption Site Locations:

1. Christine Naylor spoke about her personal experiences noting that she has suffered after losing her son to a toxic drug poisoning. She described her son as a born advocate and activist, highly educated, with a love for life prior to her son's experiencing struggles with a mental illness and substance use issues over the last eight years of his life.

Ms. Naylor expressed her concerns that her son faced, with a mental illness leading him to using drugs and alcohol to self medicate and help him cope. She advised that they spent seven years fighting a broken system trying to get him the help that he needed.

Ms. Naylor commented on her son's continued struggles leading to the progression from alcohol to cannabis crack cocaine and then to crystal meth. She expressed her belief that as her son used these drugs as his medicine to help him to cope with the bipolar disorder and if he had access to safe supply of these drugs, he would still be alive today.

Ms. Naylor discussed the growth of their community breakfast program offered seven days a week for those experiencing homelessness or precariously housing and food insecurity. She noted the program has brought the community closer in sharing their struggles, and in dealing with grief of losing loved ones to drugs. Ms. Naylor provided comments received from members of the program that a Supervised Consumption Site is a starting point, a place for people to connect to the services that can help them, to keep people alive and safe instead of people hiding because of shame and stigma, and to a place where someone would watch over them and keep them safe.

In conclusion, Ms. Naylor commented that people who use drugs are not bad people they are just people who are hurting, and the drugs help to take the hurt away. She noted her belief that if society supported instead of shamed those with mental illness and substance use issues, her son's story would have a different ending.

2. Amanda Maynard advised that she would be speaking against the proposed SCS location of 11 Innisfil Street. She discussed her family living near the proposed site and her career experience working to improve the well-being of the region's indigenous community and along side individuals struggling with both mental health and addiction issues. Ms. Maynard commented that tonight's discussion is a more complex issue than opioid overdoses and in her opinion is a systemic issue that requires far more attention in this City than the services offered at a SCS.

Ms. Maynard discussed her concerns associated the equitable health access and social services, endorsed strategies that fail to implement an all-encompassing approach of mental, physical, spiritual,

and emotional well-being and the limited approach to addressing the opioid crisis. She provided comments concerning that she has little confidence in the proposed mitigating strategies given the misleading information associated to this site and a great deal of confusion stemming from the address identified to the public during the process.

Ms. Maynard expressed her concern with the site being close to a Zumba Studio, across the street from a home daycare and surrounded by residential homes and small businesses. She commented on safety and privacy concerns for the neighborhood residents that is robust with children and impact of the SCS visitors at the proposed location due to the area being extremely busy with both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Ms. Maynard suggested in her opinion that the entrance to the SCS needs to be easily accessible and private, and away from busy streets, members of the community. She noted that she feels 11 Innisfil Street does not offer any of those things.

In conclusion, Ms. Maynard urged members of Council to hold off in making a decision that will impact the neighborhood forever. She suggested becoming an active partner in creating a community-based solution, investigate innovative and holistic approaches for mental health and addiction issues to come to a far more impactful solution.

3. Aaron Maynard discussed his disappointment with the community engagement sessions held by the applicants for the SCS, as he felt they were transparently calculated, poorly run with technical issues, and left attendees with zero confidence in the proposed mitigating strategies.

Mr. Maynard discussed moving his family to the area with the intent of providing a safe place to raise his family. He noted that the neighbourhood has rebounded and even flourishing with the return of young families and has had no concerns related to safety and drug use in the immediate vicinity of the proposed location.

Mr. Maynard expressed his concern with Council not having a say and/or influence in the operations of the SCS facility, will have massive negative impacts on the neighborhood such as safety and drug related issues to an area that does not experience those issues, the possible decrease in property values and the ability of resale of property in the neighborhood.

Mr. Maynard commented that in his opinion the various failures that the City has tried to deal with the ongoing issues at Milligan's Pond and his concern that because of this it was determined that his neighborhood is a hotspot for homelessness, and drug related issues.

In conclusion, Mr. Maynard acknowledged the financial and emotional loss of being forced to leave our home, if this facility was approved for this site. He noted that he believes they should have every right to stay here and live safely beside Barrie's beautiful bay.

4. Mayor Lehman called upon Tom and Kylee Swales from Concept of Movement to provide a deputation, and they were not present to provide the deputation.
5. Krista Westerneng advised that she operates a Yoga Studio at 110 Bradford Street for the past nine years that has provided a safe space for people to get healthy, heal physically and mentally and in some cases overcome and deal with addictions. She discussed her business operations including the studio hours the studio open between 5:30 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., is responsible of the safety of over 200 members, staff and volunteers, with patrons being predominantly women that arrive and depart alone and use the parking lot on Bradford Street adjacent to the proposed site of 11 Innisfil Street. Ms. Westerneng advised of her concerns related to proposed SCS location, including that there was no street lighting in front of the Studio, economic impacts, increase in social disorders and harassment in public areas, drug users urinating and/or deprecating on property or in front of businesses, and the

uttering of profanities or making rude gestures to the community and patrons of local businesses, which already takes place. Ms. Westerneng advised that she has attempted to mitigate some of the issues by putting up a fence, that keeps being ripped down as well as installing security lighting. She commented on an increase of discarded syringes, crack pipes and other forms of drug paraphernalia in the area, as well.

Ms. Westerneng expressed concerns associated to reports she has read about impacts to areas with an SCS including, safety concerns from lack of stability of drug users that can last for hours, aggressive behavior, the investment to install security cameras and other devices due to high levels of theft and shoplifting and that consumption sites often provide a reliable fixed customer base for local dealers and leading to more drug trafficking and use in the immediate area.

In conclusion, Ms. Westerneng acknowledged the need to ensure the health and safety of drug users and people struggling with addiction but that she would also like to ensure the health and safety of herself, staff, her clients, and business.

6. Camran Qureshi advised runs a 24-hour daycare that is within 60 to 100 metres away from proposed SCS location of 11 Innisfil Street. He highlighted on the operations of the daycare including his four years experience and opening this location two years ago, they offer 24-hour childcare and recently expanded to meet the demands in area to a capacity of 24 children.

Mr. Qureshi discussed the issues taken place at Milligan's Park and the conclusion from experts that a hub in this area is a good solution, however he noted that his side of the street is separated by a stream and the residents have not faced any problems associated to homelessness or drug issues.

Mr. Qureshi expressed his concerns associated with placing a safe injection site only 30 metres away a residential area and right against a sidewalk will leave no space to fence the site off and no privacy for the individuals entering the SCS and away from the public. He advised of a bus stop near the site and that his street is busy for traffic, pedestrians, and vehicles. Mr. Qureshi noted his concern for the safety of his family and the children that they care for in their home.

In conclusion, Mr. Qureshi advised in his opinion that this site is not the correct place for safe injection site, and not the right area.

Members of General Committee asked questions to Mr. Qureshi and received responses.

7. Victoria Scott advised that the purpose of her deputation was to urge Council to endorse the proposed location of a supervised consumption site at 11 Innisfil Street. She provided an overview of her professional life living in different communities dealing with various aspects of the health care sector, and as a member of the Site Selection Advisory Committee, noting that she has all confidence in the proposed site.

Ms. Scott discussed the unwavering in facilitating a comprehensive search for a suitable site, the inclusive Community engagement process, the final decision for the site made by the Co-applicants, noting that they did give everyone at the table an equal voice. She discussed the scientific evidence that continues to emerge from communities like Barrie, that supervised consumption sites in operation is the most effective way of dealing with the overdose crisis and that the SCS is not a temporary band aid solution. She advised that an SCS as often the first point of access to save treatment prevention, resources, and other primary care services.

Ms. Scott acknowledged the many lives lost in this region, and the effect that the pandemic has resulted in doubling on already alarming death rate due to overdoses. She expressed her concerns of individuals that missed the opportunity to connect with pathways to treatment. She noted that she felt

the delay of the application for a site increased the number of HIV and Hepatitis infections that result from sharing drug taking paraphernalia.

In conclusion, Ms. Scott commented on the preventative measures a site can offer, reduce overall health care costs, and most importantly saves lives. She noted that a crisis requires an immediate and effective response, and the SCS is the most effective and long-term strategy.

8. Anne Cleaveley addressed her concerns with the communication and lack of neighborhood and business consultation by the applicant and notification of the May 25 General Committee meeting. She advised that she learned about the safe injection consumption site by a virtual meeting held at the end of April. She noted her concerns associated with the confusion with different addresses used proposed location that was later corrected to 11 Innisfil Street. She noted that several people in the neighborhood were okay with the Bradford Street address and that no one is in favor of 11 Innisfil Street. She noted that she felt that the comments in the presentation provided to Council on May 25, 2021, by the Co-applicants were untrue or seriously outdated about her neighbourhood.

Ms. Cleaveley advised of her knowledge of HIP Developments not being advised of the proposed location of the SCS and asked that Councillor McCann share a copy of the letter from HIP Developments opposing the SCS being located near their development.

Ms. Cleaveley further commented on her concerns with the site being located close to a daycare, in a family neighborhood with many children under the age of eight, the health services and other business located within the same building as the SCS, already installed safe injection boxes being pulled off the walls and left laying upside down in Milligan's Pond.

Ms. Cleaveley suggested that an alternative site be further investigated, possibly near Downtown Barrie bus depot.

A member of General Committee asked a question to Ms. Cleaveley and received a response.

9. Louise Hansen advised that she is a resident on Perry Street, directly across the street from 11 Innisfil Street. She discussed living in the area for 20 years and the many changes that she has experienced in the neighbourhood over the years, noting that has become a nice little community that is close to the lake and close to downtown.

Ms. Hansen discussed her concerns with walking downtown day or night and being approached by individuals that are homeless and panhandling, for the safety of residents that live in the area, and an increase of crime that a SCS would bring to the area. She advised that she feels this location is not the correct location as it is a residential area, with lots of children living in the neighborhood. Ms. Hansen suggested another location would be more appropriate, perhaps in the downtown area where all the other resources would be available.

10. Darien Marinos advised that he lives across the street from the proposed site and that he feels that this site is not the best location as it is not a safe location, is very small and there is not a lot of space on a sidewalk, and the lack of lightening in parking lots. He noted his concerns about being misinformed about the address's multiple times and that the other side of the building seems more logical and private for the SCS to be located.

Mr. Marinos advised of his backyard being used as a walkthrough, his car broken into multiple times

and things taken from my backyard. He noted installing cameras on his properties to help mitigate the issues.

Mr. Marinos expressed that he understands the need for an SCS but does not believe the proposed location is the best place and should be in a more accessible, bigger location that is not close to residential areas.

A member of General Committee asked a question to Ms. Cleaveley and received a response.

11. Dr. Anita Arvast expressed deep respect for all of the deputations and the difficult issue to deal and show respect to the bravery of Christine Naylor for sharing her story. She provided her personal experience of helping an individual of having a substance abuse issue that was a refugee who came to live with her from Iran. Dr. Arvast shared the story about the individual, how he developed substance abuse issues, his journey through depression and substance abuse, and losing his life shortly after he moved from her home.

Dr. Arvast expressed her concerns for those using Milligan's Park and the dangers of disposed needles. She advised that she is a resident on Perry Street and was invited to join the consultations on the SCS and by the City through an email or by mail. She noted that that nobody chooses to die of using toxic drugs.

Dr. Arvast commented on the confusion about the address, but once she was engaged in that consultation it was clarified where the site would be located.

In conclusion, Dr. Arvast advised that she opted to support this site as it is what the City needs and is the best option and least impactful to families.

A member of General Committee asked a question to Dr. Arvast and received a response.

12. Taylor Ronaldson advised he lives across the street from 11 Innisfil Street. He discussed many issues of living in the area such as people trespass through his property, many disturbances related to drugs and especially issues with the Tent City in Milligan's Park.

Mr. Ronaldson expressed his concerns to criminal activity with break-in to his home and car and the general drug use in the area and leaving drug needles and other paraphernalia that has increased in the last three years. He commented the possibility of property values decreasing, safety concerns for families living in the area and does not believe it is fair to anyone in the community.

Mr. Ronaldson commented on confusion with the actual location originally was Bradford Street, the side of the street that is more industrial and in his opinion is more appropriate than 11 Innisfil Street. He acknowledged his understanding that there is a drug use crisis in Barrie however there is a lot better places that it can be managed.

A member of General Committee asked a question to Mr. Ronaldson and received a response.

13. Jonaleah Baguan and Lhankee Alviar advised that their family moved to the area two months ago with the impression that this area is a growing community and safe to raise his family.

Mr. Baguan and Ms. Alviar acknowledged their understanding of dealing with the current drug crisis is important, and that people need a safe site to be able to use it properly, but noted that he believes there are other locations away from residential areas to locate this. They commented on always putting their family's safety first and to keep them away from drugs or anything that could harm them.

Mr. Baguan and Ms. Alviar advised their belief that putting an SCS in this location could promote drug use and is the last thing they want for their community.

14. Katherine Hankinson advised living on Perry Street for over 31 years and can view 11 Innisfil Street from their front window. She advised they had absolutely no consultation for this site, no one phoned, came to the door, or left a leaflet in the in the mailbox.

Ms. Hankinson commented on the Bradford Street location would be better for the community and people visiting the SCS for privacy reasons and they simply would never see it. She advised the 11 Innisfil Street is a different story with no privacy and close to the neighbourhood.

Ms. Hankinson expressed her concerns with the poor presentation in the media with the address being wrong, and a picture of the location but wrong the address, finding out that actual location after it was too late to comment. She advised that in her opinion the location has no room as its only a couple of feet away from the sidewalk and that there is only one sidewalk on the street. Ms. Hankinson also expressed her concern with the ways SCS operate and concerns about bringing drug dealers into this area.

Ms. Hankinson commented that she feels they have become a target, and that the neighborhood has been moving from bad to good and now will go back to how it was years ago and that they do not believe a band aid solution is the answer. She suggested that these individuals need permanent solutions such as housing, counseling, and education.

A member of General Committee asked a question to Mr. Ronaldson and received a response.

15. Kimberly Capone advised she lives across the street from the proposed SCS location and that she was not consulted and only found out from a neighbor two or three weeks ago. She addressed why she believe 11 Innisfil Street is not the right choice for everybody, and especially in a residential area like theirs with many young children who often walk the sidewalk with their kids, playing outside, moms pushing strollers.

Ms. Capone discussed concerns with locating a SCS in this area changing calm happy visions to seeing people high on drugs walking around them, the need to explain this to her children at such a young age, and the reasoning why playing outside in the front yard, is now questionable. She commented on people under the influence being unpredictable and can not assume otherwise, and why are would anyone be willing to take that risk of harm to someone in the neighborhood. Ms. Capone noted that the people using the SCS would not have privacy at this location as its a heavy traffic area with vehicles and pedestrians.

In conclusion, Ms. Capone expressed that her kids deserve to be able to play and walk around without the vision of someone high walking past them, under the influence, and witnessing that addiction is a terrible disease. She noted that safety is a major concern, and so is the innocence of their children.

16. Cailyn Fitzgerald advised she is a resident of the downtown core and has been witness to her neighbours dying because of drug toxicity. She provided her experiences of living in the downcore and the events that that she has observed when people are under the influence of alcohol, including traffic on Dunlop Street grinding to a halt, and police being called to handle violent disturbances.

Ms. Fitzgerald commented on the individuals she has met that participate in the safe needle exchange noting that they are polite and have never threatened her. She recognized that in her opinion many of the parks and public spaces in her neighborhood are already consumption sites, putting others at risk

with hazardous litter, and illicit drug use. Ms. Fitzgerald provided comments associated with the evidence that shows safe consumption safe not only save lives, but also reduce the financial burden on community resources such as police and first responders.

In conclusion, Ms. Fitzgerald noted that a safe consumption site will not only encourage safety for Barrie citizens who use drugs, but for all families to have peace of mind.

17. Kenzie Churchward advised she is a business owner and homeowner in Downtown Barrie and lives in the west of downtown, under a kilometre away from the current proposed SCS. She noted that she has debated whether to sell her house and move her business out of Barrie, not because of the proposed SCS or drug users, but because of how utterly non empathetic and disheartening this community can be.

Ms. Churchward commented on her belief that the SCS will not be affective unless it is accessible, and why spend money if no one is going to use it. She discussed that peoples' lives are more important than a person's property value, that there are too many statistics to ignore the problem. Ms. Churwood noted that she felt if people are not in support of a SCS, they simply are not in support of saving lives.

Ms. Churchward discussed the misconception that all drug users are awful people, who want to harm people, which she feels is far from the as people that are drug users are also humans.

Ms. Churchward commented on her excitement for the future of the downtown to see less needles on streets, less drug use on streets, that drug users will have access to resources that can move them into recovery. She noted that this problem is not going to solve itself, and that we must do the ethical thing and stop preventable deaths.

18. Caitlin McKenzie advised that she has been a resident of Barrie for 10 years, and the proposed SCS would be a short walk from her home. She noted that people are dying right now, and not just drug users but some in an unnecessary and tragic way.

Ms. McKenzie discussed the recommendation from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit doctors and the scientists who care about people's ability to live and that she believes that SCS work. She commented on people's ideas that the City of Barrie has not done its due diligence and community consultation is untrue. She advised that she was consulted and know many others who have also been consulted.

Ms. McKenzie commented on consumption of drugs happening in her backyard everyday. She noted that she cannot ignore the fact that Milligan's Pond is in everyone's backyards, and it is an unsupervised consumption site, and drug use has the potential to be dangerous and deadly. She discussed the countless studies by medical professionals associated to SCS do work and there is data to prove it.

Ms. McKenzie expressed her belief that having a safe place for people to consume drugs is something our children will be proud of in approving the site and will be saving lives. She thanked City Council for doing its due diligence by listening to the research and the data and analyzing the benefits for the members of our community more than that your empathy in hopefully voting yes and moving forward with this site.

19. Pauline Bradshaw advised she lives on Perry Street, directly across the main entrance to Milligan's Park. She commented that she has not observed drug use in the park even with the issues with the

homeless encampments, that she has never seen a needle on any of the paths in the park that she walks through several times a day. Ms. Bradshaw advised that she does not believe they have an unsupervised drug problem in Milligan's Park, however she does not know what goes on during the night.

Ms. Bradshaw expressed her concern for herself and any of her neighbors that the issue for them is safety, and safety of their families, the entrance to the proposed site being one car length to the sidewalk, little room for parking when all the businesses are an operation, and there is just no place for the visitors to the SCS to mingle or line-up to get access to the services they need.

Ms. Bradshaw acknowledged that people need help, but that she believes this is not the correct location based on safety alone. She suggested that the Bradford Street entrance would be a better proposal if another building can not be used.

Ms. Bradford commented on not being informed about the proposed SCS location and that she feels it needs to be addressed and that everyone needs to be kept in the loop from now on.

20. Amanda Ridding advised that in her opinion the biggest issue not addressed is related to the patrons of SCS who are mostly located in the downtown core area. She commented the issues surrounding Milligan's Pond is related to the downtown core where needles are often discarded in parking lot, parks, and alleyways, and is where most of the crimes exists including drug related stabbings, shootings and people found passed out in the doorways of the business.

Ms. Ridding commented on safe consumption sites are typically located in the heart of the areas and is the biggest need for improvement. She suggested that the City and Co-applicant should be focusing on a downtown location and that she felt the proposed location at 11 Innisfil Street is outside of where the most issues occur.

Ms. Ridding discussed her concerns with a safe consumption site and the issues that may follow such as increased crime to area and exposure to these issues that are currently limited at best and to a neighbourhood that has been renewed for the last several years, with young families moving into the area.

Ms. Ridding commented that the 11 Innisfil Street location would create a definitive distinction between the proposed site and other SCS locations in Ontario that have rendered reports concerning the locations. She noted that in her opinion these studies are limited to the areas where people are live, need help and not in an area that was outside of the location where Barrie's issues exist. Ms. Ridding expressed her concern that the issues from the downtown would move to the proposed site. She commented that she had been advised by a registered real estate agent that introducing a safe consumption site and subsequently introducing these issues with an increased amount of traffic to an area in a state of renewal will create stigma for the neighbourhood affecting property values, lives, and savings.

Ms. Ridding acknowledged that she understands and empathizes with placing an SCS site into residential communities, along with the drug dealers, all of them is not the answer. She believes in giving a hand up, not a handout and helping those who want and are willing to invest in the commitment to getting better, with providing people with the appropriate resources to recover and not to enable them. She explained that you do not give a recovering alcoholic a drink, you give them the appropriate resources to recover.

Ms. Ridding explained that she felt there are better solutions and commented that Dr. Simon recognized the issues of downtown, with locating a safe consumption site in an industrial area is not an

option. She commented that she has discussed her concerns with Councillor Aylwin and felt that Councillor Aylwin is not promoting a site downtown where the problems exist and the issues where needles are on sidewalks, parks and doorways. She felt that the perfect solution would be the Barrie Bus Terminal in the downtown core for an SCS location, as it would have all the amenities, be accessible and cost-effective which she believes are criteria for the site.

21. Chris Riddings explained that he has managed rooming houses in the area and has dealt with many drug users. He advised that does not disagree with an SCS site but is concerned with the lack of studies or investigation completed for the location. He noted his concerns related to traffic and safety associated with the proposed site at 11 Innisfil Street.

Mr. Riddings requested that Ms. Amanda Riddings continue on his behalf.

Ms. Riddings questioned members of Council if they would agree to the SCS being put in specific neighbourhoods within the City.

A point of order was raised by Councillor Morales.

Ms. Ridding continued that she felt that the SCS site needs to be placed in a commercial area, such as the downtown core where it would be more effective and not a residential neighbourhood. She indicated that she realized that the patrons need to be helped but that rushing to a quick decision on a location would not benefit anyone and hurt the people on Perry and Innisfil Streets. She described how the Barrie Police and City staff have spent a considerable amount of time cleaning up Milligan Park trying to improve the area which could be impacted by locating the SCS in the area.

Members of Council asked questions of Ms. Riddings and received responses.

21. Shelby Jones explained that her and her spouse have lived on Perry Street for the last 57 years in the vicinity of Milligan's Park. She felt that this proposed location for an injection site is not the proper location although she is aware for the need of a location in Barrie. She felt that when Red Storey field gets developed as there would be an increase to the amount of people to the area. Ms. Jones discussed her concerns related to the traffic in the vicinity of Perry Street and Eccles Street South, including that there is no sidewalk on one side of the street.

Ms. Jones advised that when she had been advised about 80 Bradford Street as the proposed injection site that she felt that this would be fine. She advised that 11 Innisfil Street has not enough space and is not an appropriate location for an injection site.