Thank You!

coldest night OF THE YEAR

On behalf of the entire team at Street Health, we want to extend our deepest appreciation to everyone who made our 7th annual Coldest Night of the Year such a success!

Whether you stepped up as a team captain, gathered donations, contributed financially, or joined us on the walk to learn more about our local impact, your presence was felt.

We are truly moved by this community's commitment to supporting our vital services.

This event wouldn't be possible without the incredible backing of our local partners. We would like to offer a sincere thank you to:

motion clothing women

RESEARCH CAPITAL CORPORATION

CABBAGETOWN Est. 1982 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

D M C david mintz catering

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Thank you for believing in the work we do!

StreetHealth

2025 TOP 100 CHARITY Charity Intelligence's Highest Rated Charities ★★★★★

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

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Charitable Registration # 11920-0541-RR0001

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URGENT: Stop the closures!

Street Health's Statement about the Defunding, and Pending June 13th Closure, of Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS) in Ontario:

Street Health stands with the numerous professional, community and grassroots groups to oppose the Ontario Government's defunding and closure of remaining Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS). The toxic drug crisis continues to claim lives of people through out the province. SCS's offer life-saving services and must remain part of Ontario's healthcare commitment.

The government announcement, made on March 13, 2026, will force the closure of two sites in the downtown east region of Toronto – South Riverdale's Moss Park OPS and Fred Victor's SCS. *"These two sites serve a large number of individuals who are homeless or lack secure housing in our city. These closings will place additional strain on emergency services, frontline community organizations and undoubtedly result in more preventable deaths,"* states Chaudhry Ahmed, Director of Operations, Street Health.

Street Health provides healthcare for individuals who are homeless and lack secure housing. Since being defunded in 2019, Street Health's Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) has operated thanks to private donations. The OPS has close to 2,000 client visits annually.

By eliminating funding for SCS's the government is removing the opportunity for marginalized and often vulnerable people to receive wrap-around care providing access to additional services like nursing for wound care and mental health support that assists individuals with components of daily living.

"We have already seen an elevated incident of overdoses in the community since the first round of SCS closures in 2025. Harm Reduction and access to supervised consumption services and overdose prevention are essential parts of a public health approach," states Ahmed. *"The government should be funding these evidence-based harm reduction services across the province to prevent the deaths we are seeing due to the toxic and unpredictable drug supply."*

For more information:

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OR

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Harm Reduction Manager
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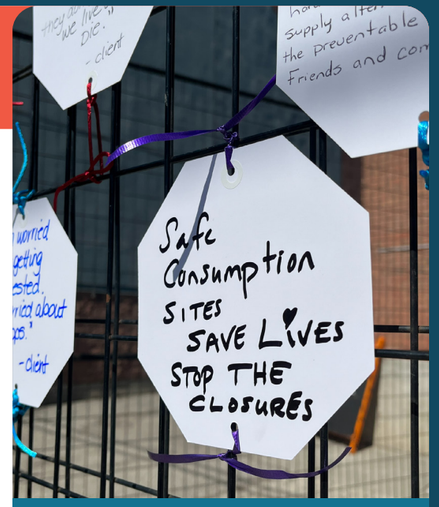
If you would like to support our OPS, please donate now.



"Since 2020, SCSs in Ontario have reversed over 20,000 overdoses — potentially fatal medical events that could mean the loss of parents, children, friends, lovers and neighbours.

The cost is too real. This is a fight we cannot afford to lose."

- Pat F., Harm Reduction Worker

Q & A with Liz, Street Health Nurse:

Since Bill 223 was passed, the resulting closure of Safe Consumption Sites (SCS) has meant an increased frequency of overdoses in the community. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Toronto's downtown east region. Sherbourne and Dundas is home to Street Health, which operates an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) and whose nursing team (composed of both Registered Nurses, RN and a Nurse Practitioner, NP) are now dealing with daily calls for response to community overdoses.

Street Health's nurses offer both primary and critical care. Recently they reflected on the changes they have seen due to the closure of four SCS's and two Urgent Public Health Need Sites since April 1, 2025. The following conversation with Liz, Street Health Nurse, provides some insight about this situation.

Can you describe the shift in the volume and nature of overdoses you are seeing since the closure of the safe consumption sites?

Liz: *The number of overdoses in the community skyrocketed after most of Toronto's Consumption Treatment Sites closed in April, 2025. We used to be called to one or two overdoses a month, and in Summer 2025 we were suddenly responding to one or more every day. Now with the Ford government forcing even more closures this June, we are bracing for even higher rates of overdoses. Overdoses in the community are very different, and much more complex, than an overdose happening in a medical environment like our Overdose Prevention Site. In the OPS they are caught early and can often be reversed with small doses of naloxone or even oxygen alone. But when overdoses aren't witnessed people can be without oxygen much longer, leading to more complications. Those overdoses need far more advanced interventions, like artificial respiration, respiratory airway devices, CPR, cardiac defibrillation, EMS transfer to hospital, and many doses of naloxone. Unwitnessed overdoses often happen in difficult settings like in a stairwell, in the road, in the rain, or in the dark. This makes our responses more complicated, with more risk to the clients and responders.*

How do you prepare to deal with overdoses in the community? What does an overdose response drill look like?

Liz: *It's incredibly important to do overdose response drills. In emergencies, many steps happen at the same time and with an unpracticed team it can be hectic. When we practice the steps together, we develop a cohesion that has allowed us to save lives in the most chaotic circumstances. Staff get to ask questions or practice new skills, and we all get to practice the emergency communication that can mean the difference between life and death in the scenarios we see regularly.*

Anyone can learn skills to help reverse an overdose. It can be scary to step in, so we focus on skills participants want to learn, and over time we all gain more confidence to increase our skillset. Some staff begin by learning how to do crowd control, then they become comfortable with calling 911, then they want to learn to give naloxone injections, then they want to practice artificial respiration, and suddenly they are comfortable switching between the many roles needed to save a life. We unfortunately have had a lot of opportunities for practice, given all the overdoses we respond to. But certain types of learning can't happen in the high stakes context of real overdoses, and drills help us improve our teamwork and build our skillsets.

What types of items are included in the overdose response kit? How does this kit ensure a faster, more effective response to an overdose in the community?

Liz: *We have a few different kits that we bring to overdoses. We have a big bag with naloxone and other emergency medications, resuscitation equipment (like ambu-bags, oxygen masks, oral airways, and more), a blood pressure cuff, a stethoscope, machines to test blood sugar and oxygen, a hemorrhage kit, and PPE. We also bring a tank of oxygen, a defibrillator, and a bag of supplies to keep us and clients safe and warm in cold, rainy, or dark situations. These items let us do a full response anywhere in the community at a moment's notice.*

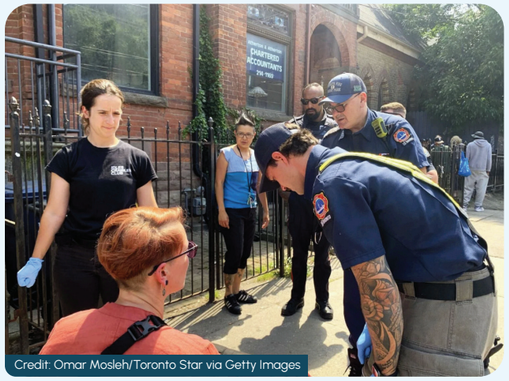
As the nursing team helps implement these protocols at Street Health, what have they learned about the unique needs of the community?

Liz: *We see massive need in the community for spaces where folks can use substances in safe and monitored environments. Places like our Overdose Prevention Site save many lives and we need more spaces like this, with longer hours. When community members lost access to the Consumption Treatment Sites, they also lost access to other services that were imbedded at the sites, like nurses, counselors, and support workers. Because of this we are also responding to increased numbers of other types of emergencies such as seizures, falls, cardiac events, and physical traumas – we are expecting this to increase even more after next wave of closures in June. It is far safer and cheaper to offer harm reduction services than to rely on EMS and hospitals, let alone the human suffering and death that they can prevent. Many lives have been lost, the community is grieving, and it is entirely preventable.*

But we've also seen the unique skills and strengths of the community. We've seen how community members constantly look out for each other, whether that means observing their friends to make sure they don't overdose, giving folks lifesaving overdose-reversal interventions, or seeking help from Street Health and others when needed.

When responding to an overdose in the community, how does the Street Health team prioritize the safety of both the responders as well as the individual experiencing an overdose?

Liz: *Since these overdoses aren't happening in more controlled settings like our Overdose Prevention Site, they are often quite unpredictable, and we have had to get creative to keep responders and community members safe. The overdoses typically take place outside, so we have developed a "cold weather kit" to keep staff and clients warm, including jackets, emergency blankets, and foam mats to keep people off the ground. There are often large crowds present, so we have improved our crowd control during overdoses. Some of our overdose responses take place in the middle of the street or at night, so we bought road flares and high visibility clothing for staff to wear. We often need to carry people off chairs or out of stairwells, so we train staff how to lift safely. The most important way we improve safety is with regular debriefs after each emergency to improve our protocols and support each other through what can be very traumatic work.*


Credit: Omar Mosleh/Toronto Star via Getty Images

As the toxic drug crisis continues evolves, how should our collective response protocols adapt? Is there something the team would like to see included that hasn't already been explored? Something that would make the community-wide response more resilient?

Liz: *We have had to adapt our emergency responses because of the increased overdoses. We increased training for our staff, we run drills, we bought supplies, we found ways to respond even during winter weather or early sunsets, and we adjusted protocols when the toxic drug supply changed how overdoses present.*

We want to expand this response community-wide. We are offering overdose response training to other organizations in the area, and we are going to meet with EMS to discuss better ways we can work together to help our clients and the community. I am incredibly proud to work alongside my colleagues and community to help save the lives that the provincial government has abandoned.

Now in spring, 2026, we continue to see escalating toxicity in Toronto's unregulated drug supply with regular changes in composition and volatility. Street Health works with Toronto's Drug Checking Service to provide clients with this free and anonymous drug checking services, as well as making information about the supply widely available. *"Now, more than ever, the toxicity of unregulated drugs is constantly changing and extremely dangerous. We know that Safe Consumption Services (SCS) and Street Health's OPS save lives. The next round of government defunding of essential SCS sites means more tragic deaths. Our workers and concerned community members are taking every step possible to support clients and ensure access to harm reduction services. The pressure of this work and the lack of government support means that we are quickly approaching a breaking point."*

As part of our 40th anniversary, we are pleased to announce that Street Health will be participating in

Doors Open Toronto 2026!

We invite you to visit us for a look behind the scenes of our historic location, and the vital work we do in the downtown east community.

Event Details:

When: May 23 & 24, from 10:00am to 4:30pm
Where; 338 Dundas Street East
What: Informational tours, insights into our current building use, and a chance to meet with our staff dedicated to providing essential health and social services to the people we serve.

Whether you are an architecture enthusiast, a local neighbour, or a long-time supporter, we would love to welcome you into our space!