



LISA GRETZKY

MPP Windsor West
Députée provinciale de Windsor-Ouest

October 11, 2023

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
College Park 5th Flr,
777 Bay St Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Minister Jones,

I am writing to you about the urgent need for approval of the SafePoint Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) site in Windsor. I previously wrote to you on March 1, 2023 regarding SafePoint and the dire need to fund this project quickly. The site has been operational under federal exemptions since April 26, 2023 and has already provided hundreds of services in my community through the prevention of overdoses and diversion from area emergency departments. The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) wrote to you on October 3, 2023 highlighting the urgent need to provide timelines for approval of their application. Until now, provincial funding has not been made available and timelines for approval have not been provided. Funding for this site has solely been provided through the WECHU which is unacceptable and further delays will impact my community.

I want to highlight the importance of SafePoint and the impact it has had in my community thus far. The WECHU's recent letter stated, *"since opening its doors on April 26, 2023, as a temporary Urgent Public Health Needs Site, "SafePoint" has had hundreds of visits from people in need of care. Dozens of referrals to addiction treatment, mental health supports, and social services have occurred in addition to primary care, wound care, and foot care on-site. The site has experienced no safety concerns, or issues requiring emergency response and has developed strong working relationships with the residents, law enforcement, and the business community in the surrounding area. In addition, the CTS site received municipal support in the spring of 2022 to proceed with the application that was later validated under the new municipal council. This work has been coordinated in large part by staff at the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU), which led the application process and solely funds the operations of SafePoint. The site is operated by our regional experts in mental health and addiction, Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare."* The WECHU have followed the necessary steps, ensured the application was completed correctly and that all information required was submitted. This has been confirmed multiple times by your Ministry.

As you are likely aware, Ontario has an opioid and overdose epidemic. The number of overdoses in my community and across the province are extremely high and very alarming. The funding needed to open and operate the SafePoint Consumption and Treatment Services site is vital and lifesaving.

I understand that safe consumption and treatment services sites across the province are under a critical incident review due to an ongoing investigation related to an incident nearby a CTS site in the Toronto area. I think everyone can agree that a security review following such a serious incidence is important.

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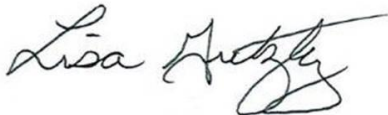
The concern that I share with my community, WECHU and Windsor council members is related to the fact that SafePoint has met all requirements, including safety requirements, set out by provincial, federal and municipal governments and yet many months have passed without you or your government providing WECHU with any certainty regarding provincial funding. I will note that all CTS requirements laid out were met and WECHU began waiting for funding direction prior to the incident at the Toronto area CTS.

Further delays with funding and application status are unnecessary. Healthcare in Ontario is under severe pressure. People requiring mental health and addiction services face long waitlists and barriers to accessing care. Delays in accessing care can have deadly consequences. Providing ongoing, stable funding for SafePoint to continue operating with no delay is just one way to combat pressures on our healthcare system. Data shows that lives are being saved and SafePoint has been successful in connecting patients to critical wrap around supports and services such as housing, social services and other health care.

The WECHU has requested a response **before October 13th** as they prepare to set their 2024 budget, as are Windsor and Essex County councils. I ask that you respond in a timely manner to ensure SafePoint, the WECHU and Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare can continue to provide the support and services that are both effective and necessary.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Gretzky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "G".

Lisa Gretzky, MPP Windsor West
Critic of Mental Health and Addictions

CC: Windsor-Essex Health Unit
The City of Windsor – Office of the City Clerk