



The Harper Government is Heading the Right Way in the Battle Against Drugs

by David Berner

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Federal Health Minister Tony Clement is on a dangerous mission.

Clement is bucking the accepted wisdom and the official stories about safe-injection sites such as Vancouver's Insite. He knows these are hideous mistakes that help very few.

He knows the facts have been manipulated by doctors and social workers and politicians to support a program that is a deadly waste.

Addressing the Canadian Medical Association the other day, Clement said: "Over the last five years, while Insite has been operating, we could have provided treatment to 5,000 addicts.

"Instead, during that time, 250 addicts have died of drug overdose alone. "The vast majority of injections still take place in back alleys and seedy hotels, and the centre's \$3-million annual cost would be better spent elsewhere."

Clement has been viciously attacked for stating the politically-incorrect truth.

Knee-jerk. Simple-minded.

These are the accusations thrown at anyone who dares question the efficacy of Insite.

Earlier this week, the Conservatives sent out a mailing decrying free needles and safe-injection sites.

There is a photo of a discarded needle in a children's playground. The word "SAFE?" is engraved on the photo.

The text talks about keeping junkies off the street and in rehab. The text uses words like "junkie."

Some are outraged at this cruel attack on the sanctity of heroin addicts.

Here's some news for them: Heroin addicts call themselves "junkies." Get over it.

Every time I speak in public about dope fiends and junkies, some cunning linguist rises in morally-superior objection.

Mark Townsend, the man responsible for running Insite, said he was depressed to find the Conservative mailing at his home.

I'm depressed every time I hear about Insite. And Townsend's depression is not my concern.

My concern is that, rather than providing treatment, too many people are helping junkies to stay stupid.

Not willing to do anything substantive about addictions, one government after another, federal, provincial and local, has dithered.

The Four Pillars, the needle exchange and Insite seemed ready answers. So respective city mayors and the 200 social service agencies in the Downtown Eastside hopped aboard the bandwagon.

The results? You tell me.

Here in B.C., the home of a million free needles a year for addicts, there are children born with diabetes. Today, the parents of those children are begging the provincial government to provide the insulin pumps these youngsters need to survive.

But if you don't support free needles, free crack kits and safe-injection sites, you're told you don't understand a complex problem.

The Harper government is heading in the right direction on drug addiction and crime.

It is to be applauded heartily for this -- and should be given a standing ovation if and when it provides money for real treatment.