

## Advocates worry Alberta could follow Ontario's new safe consumption rules



Syringes are seen at a safe injection site Monday, June 26, 2017 in Montreal. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Paul Chiasson

Darren Rathwell | Posted Aug 21, 2024 7:27 pm.

A change to safe drug consumption site rules in Ontario has some harm reduction advocates worried Alberta could follow suit.

On Tuesday, Ontario's health minister announced that drug consumption sites in that province will no longer be allowed within 200 metres of school and child care centres.

The provincial government claimed the sites only enable people to use drugs and is not a pathway to treatment.

Kym Porter is with Moms Stop the Harm and says her own son died from a drug overdose eight years ago. She's worried more lives will be lost after the changes in Ontario.

"People are going to continue to use their substances," she says. "If you don't supply a safe place to do so, the whole area becomes an unsupervised consumption site."

"Just because they can't use in a safe spot, doesn't mean they are going to start reaching out for recovery. It doesn't work that way."

Alberta was on board with both Ontario and Saskatchewan in April when they announced a sharing of ideas on managing the addictions crisis.

The Friends of Medicare's Chris Galloway says the closing of safe consumption sites is all about pandering for votes. He fears the changes could mean a closure of more sites in Alberta, where there are only seven remaining.

"Since being elected, the UCP has closed, cancelled, and reigned in multiple supervised consumption sites in the province," he says.

Galloway adds has spoken to families just about every week who have lost someone to a drug overdose.

"They see policies like this and it's very upsetting for them as well," he says. "They know it means more people are going to lose their kids and loves ones."

CityNews has reached out to Alberta's health and addictions minister for comment.