Open letter to the federal government from the current and former Mayors of Vancouver
May 10, 2011

As the Mayor and former Mayors of the City of Vancouver, we are asking the federal government to reconsider its efforts to close Insite, Vancouver’s supervised injection facility.

Our support of Insite is based on its demonstration of tangible benefits for our community. The BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE), the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority - to name a few - also recognize the vital health services that Insite provides, and support its continued operation.

Since opening in 2003, Insite has proven - beyond a doubt - its worth to our community. Scientific research confirms the facility reduces high-risk behaviours that lead to the transmission of deadly diseases such as HIV and AIDS. Insite has been shown to reduce public disorder, as well as increasing entry into addiction treatment and detox programs. Most recently, research released in The Lancet, the internationally respected medical journal, revealed that Insite has significantly reduced overdose deaths in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

In addition, independent research has shown that Insite saves money. Taken together, the available evidence unequivocally demonstrates that Insite is a key component of the Four Pillars approach, which includes prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement.

On May 12, the federal government will go before the Supreme Court of Canada to renew its efforts to try to close Insite. As present and past municipal government leaders, we respectfully ask the federal government to reconsider and drop its appeal of the earlier court decisions that support Insite.

Insite and its staff of healthcare professionals provide essential, life-saving benefits to vulnerable Canadians. For many, access to Insite is literally a matter of life and death. The timely and professional response of Insite staff has ensured that there has never been an overdose death at the facility, and it has increased the number of people who seek treatment.
options to end their use of drugs. Insite is a valued part of the community that deserves to be allowed to continue its excellent work.

Given the benefits that Insite has delivered to our community, ranging from reduced public disorder, increased use of addiction treatment services, and the prevention of overdose deaths, we urge the federal government to reconsider its legal efforts to close this vital health service.

Thank you for your consideration.

Signed,

Mayor Gregor Robertson, 2008-present
Sam Sullivan, Mayor of Vancouver, 2005-2008
Larry Campbell, Mayor of Vancouver, 2002-2005
Philip Owen, Mayor of Vancouver, 1993-2002
Art Phillips, Mayor of Vancouver, 1972-1976