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Premier of Saskatchewan
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Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Health
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Hon. Tim McLeod
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
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Statement of Concern: The Saskatchewan Government's decision to limit access to harm reduction supplies.

The [Canadian Association for Nurses in HIV/AIDS Care \(CANAC\)](#) is writing to voice their concern regarding the recently announced new provincial decision to discontinue the distribution of much-needed harm reduction supplies as well as limiting the distribution of remaining harm reduction supplies. Both of these new measures are in opposition to national and international best practices.

CANAC is a long-standing national association of nurses focused on excellence in HIV/AIDS care, promoting the health of those living or at risk for HIV/AIDS and preventing the spread of HIV infection. We stand against the dangerous and harmful impact of the recently announced political decision to discontinue and significantly reduce access to harm-reduction supplies in the province of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is currently facing the [highest rate](#) of new HIV diagnoses in Canada. The rate is nearly six times the national average, as reported for 2022. Many of Saskatchewan's [new HIV cases](#) are related to shared needle use.

The evidence to support the use of safer supplies in harm reduction is well established. Evidence demonstrates that safer supplies reduce rates of [blood-borne infections](#), including HIV. Lifetime [care costs](#) for someone diagnosed with HIV are estimated at over \$720,000. Given the low cost of safe supplies, there is [immense value](#) in the distribution of harm reduction to help prevent new HIV and Hepatic C cases.

Furthermore, people who require access to harm reduction supplies are actively struggling with substance use issues. Addiction is a [chronic neurological condition](#); it is not a choice, nor is it a character flaw.



It is also well documented that the provision of harm reduction supplies by health care and allied providers allows for individuals to be engaged in health care in ways that can and do optimize health. It is through these often small but frequent interactions that support is conveyed, health is addressed, and care and treatment strategies can be offered and encouraged.

This decision will also result in significantly increased healthcare utilization and costs. Research has already shown that harm reduction services help decrease rates of HIV and Hepatitis C infections, reduce rates of skin and soft tissue infections such as [endocarditis](#), and decrease utilization [of emergency services](#). By reducing access to harm reduction supports, the Saskatchewan government's decision directly places individuals and communities at increased risk.

Lastly, in this critical time of the Saskatchewan government and the Saskatchewan Health Authority's commitment to address and engage in Truth and Reconciliation, this decision will disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples who are already [experiencing health disparities](#) and a lack of meaningful engagement.

CANAC, in its advocacy on this matter, is supported by numerous other organizations, including but not limited to:

[The Harm Reduction Nurses Association](#)

[Saskatchewan Union of Nurses](#)

[Students for Harm Reduction & Informed Policy](#)

In solidarity with these organizations and the communities negatively affected by the decision to discontinue and severely limit harm reduction supplies, we call on the Government of Saskatchewan to reconsider its actions. Specifically, CANAC urges the government to:

- 1. Rescind the decision to limit access to safer inhalation supplies and sterile needles**
- 2. Commit to ongoing funding and support of provincial harm reduction services**

Sincerely,

The Canadian Association for Nurses in HIV/AIDS Care (CANAC)

cc Hon. Carla Beck, Leader of the Opposition
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cc Andrew Will, Chief Executive Officer, Saskatchewan Health Authority
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