

February 21, 2007

Dear Sam Sullivan,

As the mother of a son who struggles with addiction, I much appreciate your recognition of addiction as a chronic medical problem, comparable in many ways with other kinds of physical and mental disability, and therefore your recognition that people suffering from addiction need help and alternatives, not punishment and marginalization.

I also much appreciate your courage in trying to think “out of the box” and try something new to break out of what has proved to be an extremely intractable problem. As you have noted, addiction is a very complex health issue, which is not amenable to simple remedies, but the idea of substitution therapy has had some success in helping people addicted to opiates lead more stable lives (my own son has benefited in some ways from the methadone program), and therefore it seems to be worth exploring the possibilities of prescribing effective legal substitutes for illegal stimulants. You will need to get all the stakeholders on side (I especially wish you luck with the College of Physicians and Surgeons) and the “devil will be in the details” as many have observed. I know that you have talked to VANDU, and I hope that you will be including members of families of addicts as well as addicts themselves, in designing the details of your putative program.

As everyone in the health care field knows, it is the continuum of services for people struggling with addiction which is important, from harm reduction through detoxification, to treatment and rehabilitation. This idea of substitution therapy is a great addition to harm reduction, but I also strongly support your continuing efforts to press the provincial and federal governments to meet their responsibilities for more treatment opportunities and supportive housing.

Thank you for your efforts to improve the lives of ALL people living in this beautiful city. If this harm reduction initiative is successful, then everyone from addicts to business people will have reason to be grateful to you.

Yours sincerely,

Nichola Hall.