

Dear HAMSMaRT and Keeping Six Supporters,

Long time no see! With all the changes in our space, our funding, our staffing, and our political climate this newsletter got lost in the mix. However, no longer! We will be shifting the focus of this newsletter to highlight the specific work that our team is doing for the Hamilton community. This newsletter will be a continuing update on this work as well as highlighting local, provincial, and federal legislation that affects us and offering action items for all our supporters reading this newsletter. Keeping this newsletter close to home means we can try and become more involved in our local community spaces, including uplifting our allied organizations.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our current primary funders: **the Hamilton Community Foundation, Ontario HIV Treatment Network, the Karen & Peter Turkstra Family Foundation, Incite Foundation for the Arts, the Canadian Mental Health Association, James A. Burton & Family Foundation, and the Hainsworth Trust.** Thank you and we hope to continue to nurture our partnerships together! **Additionally, we would like to thank the everyday folks who donate \$5, \$10, or \$15 through our website as a one time donation or a monthly donation.** We know that making ends meet can be hard and we appreciate you giving back to your community through us - in whatever way you can! However large or small, your continued donations have allowed us to keep supporting our clients and community members. It is because of you all that we are able to give people a safe place for their medical care and wrap-around needs. Thank you to all of our amazing donors!

While we aim to give you steady information every month, we will hold room for this newsletter to transform! As we change and grow, this newsletter will change and grow. We hope you stay on this journey with us. We promise to keep you updated on the good, bad, and boring!

In solidarity,
HAMSMaRT & K6



We Moved!

In September 2024 our clinic moved! Our new location is behind the Samy's pharmacy at **660 Main St E** at the corner of Main and Fairleigh. Our new space includes:

- Two doctors offices and a nurses room
- A kitchen for our K6 chefs as they serve a delicious lunch every Tuesday and Thursday
- Spare offices for our psychiatrist, residents, and other visiting professionals or volunteers
- A harm reduction room
- A basement for medical supply storage, harm reduction storage, and clothing donations

We still hold clinics twice a week on **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-4pm**, with additional **drop-in hours on Tuesday from 10am-1pm**. We look forward to seeing you in our new digs!

Point Of Care Testing

We have recently partnered with the **Shelter Health Hep C Team** to bring our clients point of care testing for Hepatitis C, Syphilis, and HIV! The Shelter Health Team will be at the HAMSMaRT clinic every two weeks, alternating between Tuesdays and Thursdays. Any positive finger prick results will be followed up by confirmatory blood testing and then treatment as needed by our HAMSMaRT nurses and physicians.

In June, the Hep C team will be onsite on Tuesday the 10th and Thursday the 26th.



Bill 223: CTS Closures

As many of you may know, Bill 223 was introduced in August 2024 and passed later in the year, announcing that many of the Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) sites in Ontario would close on April 1st, 2025. Under the guise of "protecting the children", the Ford government announced that all CTS sites within 200m of a school or daycare centre would close. Health Minister Sylvia Jones also stated that no new sites would be able to open, taking away the option for sites to relocate. Many organizations, leaders, activists, and people with lived experience have come out and stated that this Bill will lead to an increase in drug poisonings across the province. Our community members who use drugs do not deserve to have their lives endangered by ideological government policy that is not evidence based, yet this is unfortunately what we are seeing now.



Photo from Die-In Protest held in opposition of Bill 223 at Hamilton City Hall. Organized by individuals from Keeping Six, HAMSMaRT and other allied organizations.



Photo of the YWCA Safer Use Space, with purple chairs and butterflies, symbolizing all the friends and family lost to overdose. Written on the chairs and butterflies are names of deceased loved ones alongside messages of love, support, and solidarity. Client art decorates the walls and a red dress hangs from the roof to remember murdered and missing Indigenous women. It is also a reminder that the drug poisoning crisis disproportionately affects Indigenous peoples.

This Bill also affects Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (UPHNS) like the YWCA Safer Use Space (SUS), one of the only gender-specific safer drug use spaces in Canada. Dr. Robin Lennox and RN Priyanka Jani from the HAMSMaRT team are responsible for implementing and training the medical directive for this site as well as supporting the site's medical needs. Keeping Six staff including Jammy, Nikki, and Rosie work as peers at SUS, providing their expertise as people with lived/living experience. **This site is possible only through the collaboration between all three organizations: YWCA, HAMSMaRT, and K6.** SUS was slated to close on March 31st, 2025.

However, in a hopeful turn of events, our farewell gathering on March 31st turned into a community celebration. In December 2024, legal action was brought forth against Bill 223 by The Community Group and individuals from Kensington Market Overdose Prevention Site (KMOPS). On March 28th, 2025 Judge Callaghan granted an injunction, stating that sites could stay open until he came to a verdict on the case against Bill 223. This resulted SUS being able to apply for an emergency exemption to stay open! Thanks to the efforts of The Community Group, KMOPS, and their legal team, we are still able to service women and gender-diverse people who use drugs in the Hamilton area until the final verdict is announced.

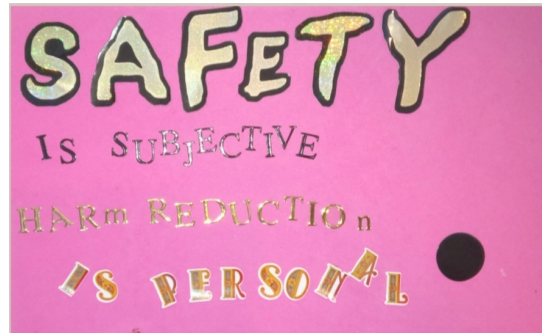
However, many other sites around the province have closed despite this injunction due to lack of funding and an expiring exemption. This includes the CTS site run by the Urban Core Community Health Centre locally. As of March 31st that site has closed, resulting in men in Hamilton having nowhere to use drugs safely. The Urban Core, along with nine other CTS sites, is transitioning into the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery and Treatment Hub (HART) model, an abstinence-based treatment centre funded by the Ford government that does not provide harm reduction. **HART Hubs around the province have not yet received funding**, resulting in mass confusion about when services will be offered and what they will specifically look like. Right now, services are limited and people's lives are at risk.

So what now?

We encourage you to keep talking about this with your friends, families, and neighbours. Get naloxone trained if you are not already and carry naloxone on you. If you or someone you know uses street drugs, encourage them to visit organizations that provide fentanyl or xylazine test strips to test their drugs prior to using. This includes us here at HAMSMaRT and K6, as well as allied orgs like the [Positive Health Network](#), [Substance Overdose Prevention and Education Network \(SOPEN\)](#), and YWCA SUS. You can also call or text the [National Overdose Response Service \(NORS\)](#) line if you are using alone: 888-688-6677. [Email or write to Sylvia Jones using a template already made for you](#). Additionally, reach out to your MPP to ensure they advocate against Bill 223 at Queens Park. You can [find your local MPP here](#). **We will be doing our part here at HAMSMaRT and Keeping Six to help keep our community safe and we hope you will too.**

Keeping Six Update

The K6 Arts team, **led by Marie**, has been putting on the Art Drop-In every Wednesday at the New Vision church! This drop-in is continually successful with strong attendance every week. Folks come together to make art, be in community with each other, and share food. Recently K6 partnered with SOPEN and the Positive Health Network to hold a few drop-in sessions where folks focus on making art that is related to the closure of SCS sites, with the intention of putting the art together into a zine format. The inspiration behind this was simply the need for catharsis after the implementation of Bill 223. Many people felt grief along with helplessness and anger. They wanted to transfer those feelings into art. The zine format also allows us to spread awareness of Bill 223 and how it is affecting our community members. The zine process is on its final edits and will be released soon! **Watch this space next month to find out how to get your hands on a zine!**



Some examples of the art that you can expect to see in our zine!

Staff Spotlight

Each month moving forward we will be doing a staff spotlight! We would like to recognize the folks in both HAMSMaRT and K6 that do hard work for our Hamilton community everyday. We have asked them about why they joined HAMSMaRT/K6, what other work they do outside of here, and any hobbies they may have! Every month you can find a new spotlight on a HAMSMaRT and K6 staff member or volunteer. We hope you enjoy getting to know the people behind the scenes here at our partnered organizations!

K6 | William (Bill) Guyatt

Bill has been a peer with K6 for over 5 years. He is involved in decision making, outreach services, and with this newsletter team! Bill's journey began 12 years ago when he lived at the YMCA and became involved with K6 peers. They helped him realize that relapses were not the end of the world and that he had options. He started having fun as he became more involved with K6 and looked forward to work! "Because it was done for me, I want to do it for others," Bill says.

Bill also is a peer with the Hep C team at Wayside House, working with a team that tests people for HIV, Hep C, and Syphilis. He also has restarted his writing career during his recovery, including recent publications in the [Bay Observer!](#)

In his spare time, Bill enjoys swimming as a long term member of the YMCA and has a deep interest in the French language. He is also a frequent contributor to the K6 writers' collective and zines.



HAMSMaRT | Dr. Robin Lennox

Robin has been working at HAMSMaRT since November 2022 as a physician. She joined because of the people! The staff, the other doctors and nurses, the peers, and most of all the people we get to serve each week.

Robin has always tried to find ways to link advocacy to her clinical work - sometimes trying to change hospital policy towards a harm reduction approach, sometimes advocating for patients individually when they face systemic barriers, and, more recently, entering into political work. Robin is now the MPP for Hamilton Centre and gets to represent the wonderful folks we serve at Queens Park.

When asked about her hobbies, Robin says she currently does not have hobbies, however does aspire to complete the pottery courses she signs up for! She enjoys her work so much that she finds herself picking up extra projects - so maybe that is her hobby!



Donate Now!

Recently almost 50% of HAMSMaRT funding was lost due to a major federal grant ending. This has had a large impact on our staff, our clients, and our ability to do this work well. We encourage you to donate to HAMSMaRT and make a difference in your community. Your donations will be used to purchase food, medical supplies, hygiene products and toiletries, and other outreach and clinic supplies. You can donate by clicking the button below and choosing the donate option on our website. You can sign up for a one time donation or a monthly donation. All donations to HAMSMaRT are tax deductible and you can request a donation letter from us for large amounts. We look forward to working with you to provide those in need with the great healthcare and daily living essentials that we all deserve!

[Donate Here](#)

We are running a clothing drive! Spring cleaning your closet? Think of us!

Check out our flyer below and email clinics@hamsmart.ca for further details.

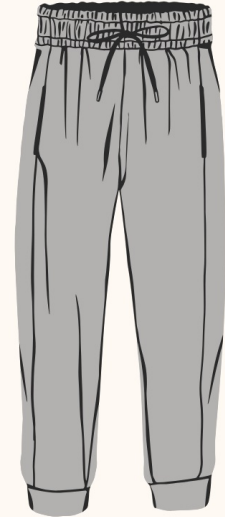


Keeping 6 & HAMSMaRT Clothing Drive

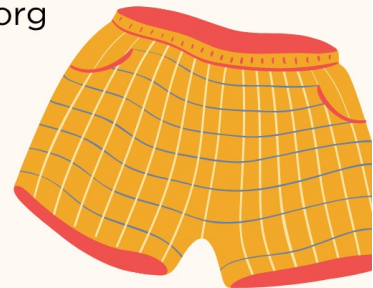
We are looking for clothing
donations for our patients/clients

Especially looking for:

- t-shirts/tank tops
- shorts
- new underwear
- running shoes
- leggings/joggers
- backpacks
- rain jackets



Drop off Tuesdays and
Thursdays 10am-4pm
660 Main St. E. Hamilton
clinics@hamsmart.ca
hamsmart.ca/keepingsix.org



July Newsletter - What's Next?

On next month's newsletter you can expect from us:

- an update on our incredible kitchen staff - you won't believe the number of people they serve!
- our K6 team will be restarting Sunday outreach - more details on that!
- our new partnership with public health for test strips - fentanyl and xylazine!
- meet our board members - who are they?
- dates for July Hep C Testing - new month new opportunities to test!
- meet two new staff members!

The Hamilton Social Medicine Response Team (HAMSMaRT) is a nonprofit organization of health providers and community organizers working to integrate clinical practice, critical analysis and political action. We work to advance the idea and practice that health is inherently political and health care providers must play a role in bringing about change in the social and material conditions which determine health.

