



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF HAMILTON

The Honourable Sylvia Jones, M.P.P.  
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The Honourable Michael A. Tibollo, M.P.P.  
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
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May 11, 2023

**Subject: Declarations of Emergency in the Areas of Homelessness, Mental Health and Opioid Overdoses/Poisoning**

Dear Minister Jones and Minister Tibollo,

At the April 12, 2023 Hamilton City Council meeting, a motion was passed declaring an emergency of Homelessness, Mental Health, and Opioid Overdoses/Poisoning. In adherence with this motion, I am writing to you today to request that the Provincial Government act on the eight measures proposed by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies". These specific measures include:

1. Creation of a multi-sectoral task force to guide the development of a robust provincial opioid response plan that will ensure necessary resourcing, policy change, and health and social system coordination;
2. Expanding access to evidence informed harm reduction programs and practices including lifting the provincial cap of 21 Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) Sites, funding Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (UPHNS) and scaling up safer supply options

3. Revision of the current CTS model to address the growing trends of opioid poisoning amongst those who are using inhalation methods;
4. Expanding access to opioid agonist therapy for opioid use disorder through a range of settings (e.g. mobile outreach, primary care, emergency departments, Rapid Access to Addiction Medicine Clinics), and a variety of medication options;
5. Providing a long-term financial commitment to create more affordable and supportive housing for people in need, including people with substance use disorders;
6. Addressing the structural stigma and harms that discriminate against people who use drugs, through provincial support and advocacy to the Federal government to decriminalize personal use and possession of substances and ensure increased investments in health and social services at all levels;
7. Increasing investments in evidence-informed substance use prevention and mental health promotion initiatives that provide foundational support for the health, safety and well-being of individuals, families, and neighbourhoods, beginning from early childhood; and
8. Funding additional and dedicated positions for public health to support the critical coordination and leadership of local opioid and substance abuse strategies.”

As with other municipalities throughout Ontario, the impact of the drug toxicity crisis continues to have a significant impact on our community. Between January 2023 and April 2023, Hamilton Paramedic Services responded to 336 incidents related to suspect opioid overdoses, with three out of the four months surpassing previous monthly totals. Furthermore, 52 suspect drug-related deaths have occurred this year as of April 12, not only representing lives cut short but also untold grief for the loved ones of these individuals and the broader community.

Hamilton continues to coordinate a local response with health and social service providers to address this public health crisis by leveraging local expertise and resources. While these local efforts continue, further response and collaboration is needed at all levels of government. The eight measures recommended by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies would provide a range of interventions to best support individuals based on their needs, and reflect the ongoing serious harms present in our community related to the toxic drug supply. For example, investing in the necessary support and prevention initiatives for our children and youth would promote mental health and work to prevent substance use. Increasing the number of CTS sites would help save lives by increasing

the number of places to safely consume substances in our community, while facilitating access to treatment options. As this complex issue transcends municipal boundaries, the Province is best situated to act decisively in order meet these goals through their capacity, resources, and leadership.

We firmly believe that one of the necessary responses to the ongoing drug toxicity crisis is to action the above eight items. However, Hamilton cannot accomplish this undertaking alone and Provincial leadership is needed to ensure success. The Hamilton Public Health Services team is more than agreeable to meet with your staff to tackle this task head-on and thereby continue to ensure that Ontario is a place where all its residents can be healthy, prosperous and reach their fullest potential throughout life.

Yours Sincerely,



Andrea Horwath

Mayor

City of Hamilton

**CC:**

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance

Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Hon. Neil Lumsden, MPP Hamilton East – Stoney Creek

Donna Skelly, MPP Flamborough – Glanbrook

Monique Taylor, MPP Hamilton Mountain

Sandy Shaw, MPP Hamilton West – Ancaster – Dundas

Sarah Jama, MPP Hamilton Centre

Association of Local Public Health Agencies

Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health

Ontario Boards of Health

Ontario Health

Ontario Public Health Association