

April 23, 2024

Dr. Kieran Moore
Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health
cmoh@ontario.ca

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Dear Dr. Moore and Minister Jones,

The Peterborough Public Health Board of Health met April 10th, 2024 and reviewed the [2023 Chief Medical Officer of Health \(CMOH\) Annual Report, Balancing Act: An All-of-Society Approach to Substance Use and Harms](#).

Substance use harms are a significant and increasing concern in the community of Peterborough. The [Public Health Ontario Burden of Health Conditions Attributable to Smoking and Alcohol](#) estimated 267 deaths and 1109 hospitalizations each year attributable to smoking and 61 deaths and 310 hospitalizations attributable to alcohol. Additionally, opioids caused an estimated 71 deaths and 429 emergency department visits in 2023.

The Board of Health specifically appreciated that you quantified the significant health and societal costs of substances, emphasized Indigenous perspectives including decolonization lenses, and focused on upstream drivers of substance use.

The recommendations that you highlight present a clear path forward that, as you indicate, will require collaborative effort by every level of government.

In particular, Peterborough Public Health was encouraged that you emphasized the importance of harm reduction interventions for opioids including access to safe inhalation at Consumption and Treatment Sites (CTS). We have written Minister Jones on two occasions (November [2022/2023](#)) regarding the urgent need for access to safe inhalation within CTSs.

The Board was supportive of recent correspondence from the [Association of Local Public Health Agencies](#) (alPHA) and their endorsement of this report, and echoes their thanks to the CMOH and his staff for “their leadership on key evidence-based strategies to prevent and reduce the harms related to tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and opioids”.

We also agree with our colleagues at the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) that, along with harm reduction, adequate resources for increased and timely access to health care and treatment is necessary to further support those impacted by the opioid crisis.

The work of responding to substance use harms, from “All-of-Society” will be challenging, but as you conclude, “If we do not invest upstream, more Ontarians will die preventable deaths, families will continue to suffer, and the province will continue to spend billions each year to cover the health care, social and legal/policing costs of substance use harms”.

Peterborough Public Health appreciates this timely and insightful report, and stands ready locally to support its implementation and collaborate across the province to ensure advocacy advances its recommendations provincially.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Councillor Joy Lachica
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Local MPPs
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health