December 20, 2020

SENT VIA E-MAIL

To: Interested Parties

Subject: Opioid Poisoning Crisis in Toronto - Update (Item HL23.2) (see Part 13 of the Board of Health's decision on page 3 which is addressed to Interested Parties)

The Toronto Board of Health, during its meeting on November 16, 2020, adopted Item HL23.2, as amended, and:

1. Reiterated its call urging the Federal Minister of Health to use the authority under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to permit the simple possession of all drugs for personal use, the need for which has become critical as the opioid poisoning crisis continues to worsen during the COVID-19 pandemic and, further, to support the immediate scale up of prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services.

2. Urged the Federal Minister of Health to provide additional funding for longer-term safer supply programs, injectable medications, and other safer supply options, including for stimulants.

3. Reiterated its request urging the Provincial Minister of Health to:

   a. convene a multi-sectoral opioid overdose task force comprised of public health officials, community-based service providers, people with lived and living experience of drug use, and family members;

   b. support and fund the implementation of a spectrum of safer supply options, including listing high-dose injectable formulations of hydromorphone on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary; and

   c. dedicate funding for overdose-related grief and trauma supports for frontline workers, people who use drugs, and family members.

4. Urged the Provincial Minister of Health to:

   a. create and fund an Urgent Public Health Need Site (UPHNS) program for Ontario to facilitate the implementation of these lifesaving services in a variety of settings;
b. provide funding to pilot and evaluate virtual and/or telephone-based supervised consumption services as well as in-person peer supervision in congregate or residential settings to complement the current service options;

c. allocate some of the new treatment funding recently announced to evidence-based, on-demand treatment services in Toronto; and

d. designate harm reduction and treatment services as essential services and provide funding to ensure that these services can effectively operate and meet the needs of people who use drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Requested the Provincial Minister of Health to reinstate funding for the Overdose Prevention Sites operated by Street Health and St. Stephen’s Community House given the urgent and ongoing need for these lifesaving health services.

6. Requested the Provincial Minister of Health to expand the criteria for naloxone distribution to allow service providers to administer naloxone to clients in their programs.

7. Requested the Provincial Minister of Health to collect and provide socio-demographic data, such as sexual orientation, Indigenous identity, race or ethnicity, and income status, on fatal and non-fatal overdoses in Toronto to better understand who is being impacted to inform overdose responses.

8. Urged the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council to review the regulatory changes in British Columbia, consult with current safer supply prescribers about the regulatory issues they are facing, and advise the Provincial Ministry of Health and the relevant regulatory colleges on how to address regulatory uncertainties to support the expansion of safer supply initiatives in Ontario.

9. Requested the Medical Officer of Health to report on the status of conversations with the City of Toronto, enforcement agencies, and the Federal and Provincial Governments on decriminalizing the simple possession of drugs for personal use.

10. Requested the Medical Officer of Health to work with the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, to include the decriminalization of the simple possession of all drugs for personal use as a key plank in the City of Toronto's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan in recognition of the differential and negative impacts that this criminal law has on equity-seeking groups in Toronto such as Black and Indigenous peoples.

11. Requested the Medical Officer of Health, in consultation with the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to continue to work with community partners toward urgently expanding the overdose prevention response and other harm reduction measures in shelters.

12. Requested the Medical Officer of Health to work with community partners and City divisions on options to expand grief and trauma supports for people who use drugs, family members, and service providers who are impacted by the opioid poisoning
13. Directed that the report (November 5, 2020) from the Medical Officer of Health be forwarded for information and consideration to all Boards of Health in Ontario, the Council of Medical Officers of Health, the Urban Public Health Network, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Ontario Medical Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

To view this item and background information online, please visit:

Yours sincerely,

*Julie Lavertu*

Julie Lavertu  
Board Secretary  
Toronto Board of Health

Sent (via e-mail) to the following individuals and organizations:
- Algoma Public Health Board of Health, c/o Lee Mason, Chair  
- Brant County Board of Health, c/o John Bell, Chair  
- Chatham-Kent Board of Health, c/o Councillor Joe Faas, Chair  
- Durham Region Health and Social Services Committee, c/o Regional and Councillor Bob Chapman, Chair  
- Eastern Ontario Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Syd Gardiner, Acting Chair  
- Grey Bruce Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Mitch Twolan, Chair  
- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Mayor Kristal Chopp, Chair  
- Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Doug Elmslie, Chair  
- Halton Region Board of Health, c/o Gary Carr, Halton Regional Chair  
- Hamilton Board of Health, c/o Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Chair  
- Hastings Prince Edward Public Health Board of Health, c/o Jo-Anne Albert, Chair  
- Huron Perth Public Health Board of Health, c/o Councillor Kathy Vassilakos, Chair  
- Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Deputy Warden - Frontenac Islands Denis Doyle, Chair  
- Lambton County Board of Health, c/o Kevin Marriott, County Warden and Chair  
- Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Doug Malanka, Chair  
- Middlesex-London Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Maureen Cassidy, Chair  
- Niagara Region Public Health & Social Services Committee, c/o Regional Councillor Pat Chiocchio and Regional Councillor Barbara Greenwood, Co-Chairs  
- North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Nancy Jacko, Chair  
- Northwestern Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Doug Lawrance, Chair  
- Ottawa Board of Health, c/o Councillor Keith Egli, Chair
• Peel Board of Health, c/o Nando Iannicca, Regional Chair
• Peterborough Public Health Board of Health, c/o Mayor Andy Mitchell, Chair
• Porcupine Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Sue Perras, Chair
• Region of Waterloo Board of Health, c/o Karen Redman, Regional Chair
• Renfrew County and District Board of Health, c/o Janice Visneskie Moore, Chair
• Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Deputy Mayor Anita Dubeau, Chair
• Southwestern Public Health Board of Health, c/o Warden Larry Martin, Chair
• Public Health Sudbury and Districts Board of Health, c/o Councillor René Lapierre, Chair
• Thunder Bay District Board of Health, c/o Councillor James McPherson, Chair
• Timiskaming Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Mayor Carman Kidd, Chair
• Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Board of Health, c/o Mayor and Councillor George Bridge, Chair
• Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Board of Health, c/o Warden Gary McNamara, Chair
• York Region Community and Health Services Committee, c/o Regional Councillor Gino Rosati, Chair
• Gordon Fleming, Manager, Public Health Issues, Association of Local Public Health Agencies, Council of Medical Officers of Health
• Dr. Cory Neudorf, President, Urban Public Health Network
• Ian Culbert, Executive Director, Canadian Public Health Association
• Pegeen Walsh, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association
• Allan O'Dette, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Medical Association
• Dr. Doris Grinspun, Chief Executive Officer, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
• Peter Cuthbert, Interim Executive Director, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
• Jeff McGuire, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police
• Carole Saab, Chief Executive Officer, Federation of Canadian Municipalities
• Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario

c (via e-mail):
• Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health, Toronto Public Health