

Toronto Drug Strategy Recommendations*

Leadership & Co-ordination:

Recommendation 1. The City of Toronto establish a Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee to oversee implementation of the strategy and to monitor and respond to emerging substance use issues in Toronto.

Recommendation 2. The City of Toronto establish a dedicated secretariat to ensure ongoing implementation of the Toronto Drug Strategy.

Recommendation 3. Implementation of the Toronto Drug Strategy be co-ordinated with related municipal initiatives such as the Community Safety Plan, the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, the Toronto Youth Strategy and the Streets to Homes Initiative.

Recommendation 4. The City of Toronto pursue opportunities with the federal and provincial governments to facilitate intergovernmental co-operation and action to reduce the harms associated with substance use in Toronto.

Recommendation 5. The City of Toronto urge the Province of Ontario to formalize its commitment to collaborate with the Health Education Enforcement Partnership and other key partners to develop a comprehensive drug strategy for Ontario.

Recommendation 6. The City of Toronto support development of the National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol, Other Drugs and Substances and continue to actively participate in national efforts to reduce the harms of substance use.

Children & Families:

Recommendation 7. Toronto Public Health and the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health work with community-based agencies to expand comprehensive prevention programming for families, such as the Strengthening Families program. (P)

Recommendation 8. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to increase funding for family-based support services to address issues of substance use within the family. (T)

Recommendation 9. The City of Toronto, in partnership with child welfare agencies, the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health and community service providers develop a range of child custody options to support parents who want treatment, including the provision of on site childcare at treatment facilities. (T)

Youth:

Recommendation 10. Toronto Public Health partner with the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health, school boards, community groups and youth to develop comprehensive prevention programming for youth. (P)

Recommendation 11. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to ensure that mandatory comprehensive drug prevention programming be extended through all high school grades and integrated throughout the curriculum and school environment. (P)

Recommendation 12. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to provide funding and support to school boards to provide teacher training and dedicated staff time to ensure that early intervention, counselling and other supports are in place to assist students who may have alcohol or other drug issues. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 13. The City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada increase funding for youth employment programs, including high-support employment programs for diverse youth populations. (P)

Recommendation 14. The City of Toronto and the Government of Canada provide secure, long-term funding for the Street Involved Youth Program to ensure this successful harm reduction youth employment model can continue. (HR)

Recommendation 15. The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee establish a work group to determine what harm reduction services are required for youth in Toronto. The work group should co-ordinate their efforts with those of existing youth committees, for example, Young Parents No Fixed Address, the Homeless Youth with Concurrent Disorders group, the Youth Shelter Interagency

*Where appropriate recommendations are designated by the following: "P" for prevention, "HR" for harm reduction, "T" for treatment, "E" for enforcement

committee, the Streets to Homes Initiative, the Toronto Youth Cabinet and the Toronto Youth Substance Use Treatment Agencies Cluster. (HR)

Recommendation 16. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to increase funding to expand the range and number of treatment options for youth. (T)

Recommendation 17. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to allocate increased funding for residential treatment services for youth in Toronto. (T)

Recommendation 18. The City of Toronto urge the committee reviewing the Safe Schools Act to recommend alternatives to suspension to ensure that youth are not excluded from the education or other supports they need. (P and E)

Recommendation 19. The Youth Criminal Justice Work Group of the Mayor's Panel on Community Safety be requested to develop supports for alternatives to prosecution for youth charged with offences relating to or motivated by substance use. In addition, a member of the Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee should be appointed to that Work Group to liaise between the two initiatives. (E)

People who use substances:

Recommendation 20. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to strengthen regulatory legislation and policy regarding access to alcohol and maintain a strong regulatory framework. (P)

Recommendation 21. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to implement stronger enforcement of the Liquor Licence Act to reduce the illegal distribution of alcohol and to prevent underage drinking and service to people who are intoxicated. (P)

Recommendation 22. The City of Toronto work with the provincial government to limit the number of licenced establishments within any given area of the city to reduce the harms of alcohol for individuals and neighbourhoods. (P)

Additional recommendations of City Council

Recommendation 22 (a). *That the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario be requested to consult and work closely with the City of Toronto for the purpose of reviewing and approving applications for Liquor Licences (P).*

Recommendation 22 (b). *That the City of Toronto:*
(i) *reaffirm its commitment to develop a protocol to co-ordinate the review, response and approval of Liquor Licence applications by City divisions; and*
(ii) *undertake a review of its operations with respect to the review of Liquor Licences for the purpose of designating a*

specific division that will be responsible for the co-ordination of these reviews, and the communication of a response on each application (P).

Recommendation 23. The City of Toronto urge Health Canada, the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ontario Association of Pharmacists, the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario College of Family Physicians to reduce the misuse of prescription drugs and the diversion of prescription drugs into the illegal drug market. (P)

Recommendation 24. The City of Toronto support federal legislation to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of cannabis for personal use. This support is contingent upon a commitment from the federal government to ensure appropriate levels of funding for prevention, harm reduction and treatment to minimize the prevalence of cannabis use and its associated harms, especially for youth. (P, HR and E)

Recommendation 25. Toronto Public Health partner with the Office of the Chief Coroner, the Toronto Police Service, hospitals, pharmacies, researchers, community groups and people who use substances to develop a local drug and drug use surveillance system with protocols to issue broad-based alerts about potentially dangerous substances. (P and HR)

Recommendation 26. The City of Toronto expand its innovative harm reduction outreach strategies including the provision of equipment to support safer use of substances, as outlined in this report, to reach marginalized drug users, in particular people who use crack cocaine. (P and HR)

Recommendation 27. The City of Toronto develop an appropriate service delivery model, including possible sources of funding, for a 24-hour crisis centre for people using legal and illegal substances. (P, HR, T, E)

Recommendation 28. The City of Toronto work with the Ministry of Community & Social Services, the Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care and other relevant ministries, institutions and community groups to determine what additional harm reduction services may be needed within the shelter system and to determine appropriate service models and sources of funding to better respond to the needs of homeless people with substance use issues. (HR)

Recommendation 29. The City of Toronto urge the Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care to increase funding for community-based case management services to provide comprehensive support for people with substance use and/or mental health issues. (T)

Recommendation 30. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to commit new funding and resources to expand the capacity and range of all treatment services in Toronto that reflects the broad diversity of need. (T)

Additional recommendation of City Council:

Recommendation 30 (a). *That the Medical Officer of Health be requested to explore the option of adding the opening and promoting of withdrawal clinics and long-lasting abstinence therapies, and report to the Board of Health (T).*

Recommendation 31. The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee work with the Toronto area Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to ensure the planning and funding of mental health and addiction services in Toronto is addressed as a priority area. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 32. The City of Toronto work with provincial and federal governments, the United Way of Greater Toronto and other funders to increase funding for day programs that provide social, education and vocational support to vulnerable groups including people who use substances. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 33. The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee develop strategies to address service barriers for all people with substance use issues. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 34. The City of Toronto work with appropriate provincial ministries and institutional and community service providers to ensure that prevention, harm reduction and treatment services are available where people need them throughout the city and ensure that this information is available to diverse populations. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 35. The City of Toronto urge the federal and provincial governments to fund and provide increased harm reduction services, including needle exchange, in all correctional facilities without increasing reliance on volunteer services to deliver those supports. (HR)

Recommendation 36. The City of Toronto urge the federal and provincial governments to expand and increase the availability of drug treatment options in prisons to include methadone maintenance therapy for any inmate with an opiate addiction. And further, that comprehensive release and follow up care plans be established before people are released back into the community. (T)

Recommendation 37. The City of Toronto continue to work with the Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and relevant community groups to improve discharge planning for people leaving hospitals, courts, jails and other institutions. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 38. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to increase the minimum wage to reflect increases in the cost of living. (P and T)

Recommendation 39. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to increase social assistance rates to recognize Toronto's high cost of living and to compensate for increases in the cost of shelter, food, transportation, employment supports and other basic needs since the 21.6% rate reduction in 1995. (P and T)

Recommendation 40. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to reinstate addiction as an eligible disability under the Ontario Disability Support Program. (P and T)

Recommendation 41. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to provide long-term and increased funding for voluntary trusteeship initiatives. (P and T)

Recommendation 42. The City of Toronto urge the provincial and federal governments to increase funding for pre-employment, skills development and employment programs. (P and T)

Recommendation 43. The City of Toronto urge federal and provincial governments to fund flexible supportive and affordable housing initiatives that include the opportunity to develop both on site and off site supports to help people with alcohol or other drug use issues to maintain their housing. (P and T)

Recommendation 44. The City of Toronto's Affordable Housing Office develop harm reduction housing options appropriate for Toronto. (HR)

Neighbourhoods & Communities:

Recommendation 45. The City of Toronto, including the Toronto Police Service, schools and other partners work with neighbourhood groups that support a comprehensive and inclusive approach to substance use issues to develop locally-based strategies to reduce alcohol and other drug related crime. (P, HR, E)

Recommendation 46. The City of Toronto, including the Toronto Police Service, work with public and private sector landlords, including the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, to develop strategies to address drug-related crime and disorder in rental housing. (P and E)

Recommendation 47. The City of Toronto support the Toronto Police Service to increase enforcement efforts through partnerships with local, regional and national law enforcement agencies targeting high-level drug traffickers, importers and producers of illegal substances. (E)

Additional recommendation of City Council:

Recommendation 47 (a). *That the City of Toronto work with the Toronto Police Service and appropriate community groups and service providers to develop strategies to prevent and stop the use of children as 'runners' for drug*

dealers in our communities; and further, that the federal Minister of Justice be requested to review the Criminal Code with the view to strengthening sentences for offences where children/youths are being exploited by adults engaged as 'runners' for drug dealers (P and E).

Recommendation 48. The City of Toronto ensure resources are available for municipal agencies to effectively respond to illegal drug production operations such as marijuana grow operations. These agencies include the Toronto Police Service, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Hydro, Toronto Fire Service and Municipal Licensing and Standards. (E)

Additional recommendation of City Council:

Recommendation 48 (a). *That the federal government be requested to: stiffen the penalties for both those convicted of operating grow houses and the owners of the properties who carry on these operations, with a view to imposing a 10-year jail term for those convicted; institute a ban on conditional sentencing (house arrest) for serious drug crimes; and impose higher fines for drug dealers and producers (E).*

Recommendation 49. Toronto Public Health re-convene the Get the Needles off the Street Committee to ensure City divisions and external organizations have co-ordinated policies and procedures in place to reduce the volume and ensure proper disposal of discarded needles and other drug using equipment. (P and HR)

Recommendation 50. Toronto Public Health work with the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health to actively promote the Safer Bars Program to prevent alcohol-related violence in licensed and other establishments and to review the potential to include this training as a mandatory element of the municipal licensing requirements. (P and HR)

Additional recommendation of City Council:

Recommendation 50 (a). *That the Province of Ontario be requested to review the legislative provisions applicable to licensed establishments so that they would be required to show proof yearly that the requirements of the Safer Bars Program are met, and that licences be suspended until such time as it can be demonstrated that these requirements have been met (P).*

Recommendation 51. The City of Toronto urge officials in the criminal justice system to make more referrals to the Toronto Drug Treatment Court as an alternative to incarceration for non-violent drug offences. (T and E)

Recommendation 52. The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee explore alternative enforcement strategies employed by police in other jurisdictions to determine if any policies or practices are appropriate for Toronto. (HR and E)

Recommendation 53. The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Committee bring together police, other criminal justice officials, community agencies and groups and residents associations to explore alternative community justice approaches appropriate for Toronto. (E)

Awareness, Education & Training:

Recommendation 54. The City of Toronto, in partnership with the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health and community groups, develop comprehensive strategies to inform the public about substances and substance use issues. Specific areas to include:

- accurate information about the benefits and harms of substances and substance use
- impacts of substance use on neighbourhoods and communities
- potential risks such as driving under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, etc
- the role and effectiveness of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement responses. (P, HR, T, and E)

Recommendation 55. The City of Toronto, in partnership with the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health and community groups, develop strategies to address stigma and discrimination toward people who use substances. (P)

Recommendation 56. Toronto Public Health work with the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health, Community Information Toronto and the Drug & Alcohol Registry of Treatment to provide clear, accessible, multi-lingual information to the all members of the community about the full range of substance use programs and services and how to easily access them. (P, HR, T and E)

Recommendation 57. Toronto Public Health, in partnership with relevant institutions and community groups, expand overdose prevention strategies for all substances. (P and HR)

Recommendation 58. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to develop a health human resources plan including strategies to support organizations in the recruitment and retention of health care providers to work with people who use substances. Providers should include general practitioners, nurse practitioners, the new Family Health Teams and alternative practitioners. (P, HR and T)

Recommendation 59. The City of Toronto work with partners, such as the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health, universities, colleges, educators and training centres to ensure that comprehensive education and training on substance use and mental health issues is included in the educational curriculum of enforcement, health, mental health and social service workers as well as part of ongoing professional development. (P, HR, T, E)

Recommendation 60. The City of Toronto develop strategies to promote more opportunities for peer workers to effectively and meaningfully work in and deliver programs. (HR and T)

Recommendation 61. The City of Toronto urge the provincial government to make funding available for ongoing supervision, training and skill development of peers working in health and social services. (HR and T)

Recommendation 62. The City of Toronto support the development of a “drug users group” to undertake a range of activities, including advocacy for the rights of people who use illegal drugs, harm reduction initiatives, education, community development and consumer representation. (HR)

Research & Evaluation:

Recommendation 63. The City of Toronto secure funding to independently evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Toronto Drug Strategy.

Recommendation 64. The City of Toronto work with the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health and other institutional and community-based researchers to ensure efforts are targeted toward practice-oriented research in the areas of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement. (P, HR, T and E)

Recommendation 65. The City of Toronto conduct a needs assessment and feasibility study for supervised consumption sites taking into account the decentralized nature of drug use in Toronto. (P and HR)

Amendment by City Council to Recommendation 65:

And, that such a study include information on the effects of drug use in Toronto on:

- *neighbourhoods and communities, including proximity to schools where young people congregate*
- *commercial and industrial businesses*
- *crime patterns in geographic areas, and*
- *property values in surrounding areas.*

Further, that City Council reaffirm that no consumption sites will be established unless the protocol is followed, which requires that federal, provincial, municipal and police approval be given prior to the establishment of such a facility, and during the feasibility study, the issue of neighbourhood impacts be specifically addressed, the ward Councillors be surveyed for residential groups that would be interested, and staff seek the input of those residential groups on this matter prior to the completion of the feasibility study.

Further, that an assessment of the operation of a supervised consumption site, such as the Vancouver facility, be conducted on site by a team comprised of representation from the Toronto Police Service, City Council and City staff. And, that an in-depth examination be done of the Mobile Safe-Use Unit program in service in Berlin.

Recommendation 66. The City of Toronto and the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health ensure that broad dissemination plans are developed for research they fund or conduct to expand the knowledge and understanding of substance use issues in the community.

Additional recommendations of City Council:

Recommendation 67. *That the City Manager, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health, be requested to report to the Policy and Finance Committee on implementation and budgetary issues; and that this report be submitted for consideration during the 2006 Operating Budget process.*

Recommendation 68. *That a copy of the report, entitled “Toronto Drug Strategy Report – A Comprehensive Approach to Alcohol and Other Drugs in the City of Toronto,” dated October 2005, be forwarded to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and all municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area.*