



Councillor
Gord Perks
WARD 4 · PARKDALE–HIGH PARK

HL23.2.1

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November 2nd, 2020

To: Members of the Board of Health

From: Councillor Gord Perks
Chair, Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel

Re: Urgent Need for Action on the Opioid Poisoning Crisis

At its meeting of September 24, 2020, the Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel again discussed the ongoing impacts of the opioid poisoning crisis, which is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. People who use drugs continue to face a high risk of overdose and death because of the increasingly toxic unregulated drug supply, reduced availability of harm reduction, treatment and other services, and public health measures that are needed to address the pandemic.

While the federal and provincial governments have mobilized to address the COVID-19 pandemic, very little action has been directed to the opioid poisoning crisis. We need urgent action now in a number of key areas to help save lives, and improve the health and safety of people who use drugs in our community. Furthermore, actions taken must ensure the perspectives of people with lived experience of drug use are central to these efforts.

Specifically, the Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel is asking the Board of Health to:

1. Reiterate its request of the federal government to grant an exemption under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to permit the possession of all drugs for personal use for all Canadians.¹
2. Urge the federal government to provide long-term funding to ensure sustainability and expansion of safer supply programs in Toronto to ensure people have access to these critical services.

¹ Note: Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel members representing the Toronto Police Service abstain from voting on matters directly related to Canadian criminal law due to the nature of their role in the criminal justice system.



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3. Urge the provincial government to increase funding to harm reduction services in Toronto to ensure they are able to provide life-saving and other support services.
4. Urge the provincial government to dedicate funding to ensure access to on-demand treatment in Toronto.

Sincerely,

Councillor Gord Perks
Ward 4 Parkdale – High Park
Chair, Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel



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