

Note: On November 20, 2020, Barb Panter clarified that her communication below pertains to Item HL23.2, Opioid Poisoning Crisis in Toronto - Update, and not Item HL23.3, Toronto Public Health 2021 Operating Budget Request, as indicated in her e-mail.

Board of Health

From: Barb Panter <pbarbara@sschto.ca>
Sent: November 13, 2020 5:12 PM
To: Board of Health
Subject: My comments for 2020.HL23.3 on November 16, 2020 Board of Health

Categories: Communications

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the November 16, 2020 Board of Health meeting on item 2020.HL23.3, Toronto Public Health 2021 Operating Budget Request

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Opioid Poisoning Crisis in Toronto - Update

Good morning Board of Health members, and fellow deputants. My name is Barb Panter and I've been working in the harm reduction field for over 20 years. I currently oversee drop-in and harm reduction programs at The Neighbourhood Group | St. Stephen's Community House. In all my years of doing this work I have never experienced a situation as dire as the one we are in now.

I see in the motion before the board that the Medical Officer of Health recommends other levels of government to take action on the overdose crisis we are currently experiencing. While this is important it is not enough. The City can and must act to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

The report from City staff state that there is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report. But we know that the services that help prevent overdose (supervised consumption sites, case management, housing, outreach, and other harm reduction programs) cost money. Those of us providing those services are already stretched to the limit and beyond. I oversee a supervised consumption site that has been operating for two years with zero government funds. Are we really expected to run these programs on charitable donations? During the Covid pandemic we have seen what can be accomplished at the City level when we put our minds to it, and are willing to allocate funds to deal with an emergency. The overdose epidemic is an emergency that has already cost us the lives of over a thousand Torontonians in the past four years. It is past time to act. We implore the City to take action.

Sincerely,

Barb Panter, Manager
Drop-in and Harm Reduction Services
The Neighbourhood Group | St. Stephen's Community House