



REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Additional Overdose Response Measures

Date: September 18, 2017

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In his role as Chair of the Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel (the Panel), Councillor Cressy submitted nine motions to the Board of Health (BOH) for consideration at its September 25, 2017 meeting. The motions represent measures the Panel members feel are urgently needed to address the overdose crisis in Toronto.

Overall, Toronto Public Health (TPH) is supportive of the recommendations made by the Panel. This staff report provides some additional information related to three of the recommendations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

On September 22, 2015, the BOH approved a report from the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) on current trends, and prevention and response for overdose in Toronto.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.HL6.4>

On December 5, 2016, the BOH approved a motion requesting the Acting MOH, in coordination with the Panel, to develop a Toronto Overdose Action Plan, and to report back to the January 23, 2017 BOH meeting on its status and next steps.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.HL16.2>

On January 23, 2017, the BOH approved a report from the Acting Medical Officer of Health providing an update on the development of the Toronto Overdose Action Plan, and committing to report to the March 2017 BOH with a final plan.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.HL17.4>

In March 2017, the BOH approved a report and recommendations from the MOH related to the Toronto Overdose Action Plan.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.HL18.3>

COMMENTS

On behalf of the Panel, Councillor Cressy submitted nine motions to the BOH for consideration at its September 25, 2017 meeting on measures the Panel feels are urgently needed to address the overdose crisis in Toronto.

Most of the Panel's recommendations reflect actions that are contained in the Toronto Overdose Action Plan which was approved by the BOH in March 2017. As such TPH supports the actions recommended by the Panel. There is, however, some additional information regarding three of the Panel's recommendations, outlined below for BOH consideration.

Recommendation #1, is for the BOH to support a "request [to] the Premier of Ontario to immediately declare an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act in response to the marked increase in opioid overdoses and related deaths throughout Ontario." TPH was a signatory to the August 29th advocacy letter from over 700 health and community stakeholders calling for this action, which was presented to the Premier of Ontario. Through the media, Premier Wynne has indicated she is not prepared to call a provincial emergency stating that "When there's an emergency declaration, you're usually dealing with a situation that has a beginning and a foreseeable end, whether it's a flood or fire. The challenge with this situation is this is not a situation that has a foreseeable end. We're talking about a crisis that is going to be ongoing".¹ The Province however, is taking some action through Ontario's Opioid Strategy. Further, on August 28, 2017, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced \$222 million in additional funding for the opioid crisis across the province over the next three years. Details about this funding, including how much will be allocated for Toronto, are still pending.

Recommendation #2, is for the BOH to support a "request [to] City Council to appoint or designate an Overdose Coordinator with the authority to direct and coordinate the City's response across divisions and agencies". The MOH Health has the lead role to coordinate implementation of the Board-approved Toronto Overdose Action Plan and is actively working with City of Toronto divisions and diverse community partners on this work.

Recommendation #9 calls for "the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to appropriately resource and mandate the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario to provide quarterly reports on opioid overdose deaths." The timeliness of data continues to be a challenge in Ontario, including Coroner data. Requesting monthly reports would greatly assist TPH's ongoing monitoring of and response to the overdose crisis in Toronto.

¹ The Canadian Press, August 29, 2017

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SIGNATURE

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