

New Funding from Health Canada Substance Use and Addictions Program

Date: March 29, 2021

To: City Council

From: City Manager and Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

REASON FOR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

The attachment to this report contains information explicitly supplied in confidence to the City of Toronto by the Federal Government.

SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening the opioid poisoning crisis in Toronto and across Canada. Multiple jurisdictions, including Toronto, have reported spikes in fatal and non-fatal overdoses during the pandemic, which may reflect changes in the unregulated drug supply, as well as service reductions and physical distancing requirements.

On March 8, 2021, the Government of Canada notified Toronto Public Health of available funding from the Health Canada Substance Use and Addictions Program for expanded harm reduction services provided through The Works.

This report seeks approval for the Medical Officer of Health to enter into a Contribution Agreement with Health Canada for the expanded harm reduction services. This report also recommends increasing Toronto Public Health's 2021 Operating Budget to accept the new federal funding that will cover 100 percent of the cost of the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager and Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. City Council increase the Approved 2021 Operating Budget for Toronto Public Health by the amount identified in Confidential Attachment 1 and four temporary positions to fund expanded harm reduction services.

2. City Council authorize the Medical Officer of Health to enter into the Contribution Agreement with Health Canada for expanded harm reduction service on such terms and conditions that are satisfactory to the Medical Officer of Health and in a form approved by the City Solicitor.

3. City Council authorize the public release of Confidential Attachment 1 following the Federal Government's public release of the information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed the report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On March 20, 2017, the Toronto Board of Health endorsed the Toronto Overdose Action Plan which included recommendations to support injectable diacetylmorphine (prescription heroin) and/or hydromorphone as an opioid substitution treatment option. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.HL18.3>

On November 16, 2020, the Toronto Board of Health 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 and reiterated its request urging the Provincial Minister of Health to 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. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL23.2>

COMMENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening the opioid poisoning crisis in Toronto and across Canada. Multiple jurisdictions, including Toronto, have reported spikes in fatal and non-fatal overdoses during the pandemic, which may reflect changes in the unregulated drug supply, as well as service reductions and physical distancing requirements.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) has offered harm reduction and low-barrier health and social services since 1989 through The Works. Located in the epicentre of Toronto's opioid poisoning and housing crises, The Works is accessible to highly marginalized people who use drugs who face formidable risk for overdose. The Works provides an extensive array of wrap-around services, including support, nursing care, referrals, outreach, naloxone distribution, supervised consumption services, and a low-threshold opioid agonist treatment (OAT) clinic.

On March 8, 2021, the Government of Canada notified Toronto Public Health of available funding for expanded harm reduction services that would be provided through The Works.

This report seeks approval for the Medical Officer of Health to enter into a Contribution Agreement with Health Canada to fund these expanded harm reduction services. This report also recommends increasing Toronto Public Health's 2021 Operating Budget to accept the new federal funding that will cover the full cost of the program.

The new services enabled through this funding aims to provide a pathway into care whereby clients have increased agency over improving their quality of life, health and safety. This project will support clients to access and remain connected with health, housing, income and community programs that meet their specific needs.

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SIGNATURE

Chris Murray
City Manager

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health

ATTACHMENTS

Confidential Attachment 1