



Toronto Police Service

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Office of the Chief of Police

File Number:

Sent via e-mail

November 23, 2021

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health
277 Victoria Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M5B 1W2

Dear Dr. de Villa:

Re: Letter of Support – Alternative Approach to Drug Criminalization in Toronto

Thank you for providing the Toronto Police Service with the opportunity to participate in Toronto Public Health's ongoing efforts to develop an alternative approach to drug criminalization in Toronto.

We agree that the current approach to managing drug use does not support safe communities or advance the health of people who use drugs. Decriminalization of the simple possession of all drugs – combined with the scale-up of prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services – is a more effective way to address the public health and public safety harms associated with substance use.

Decriminalization has been supported by both the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) nationally, and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) provincially. As highlighted by the OACP, we agree that:

- Substance Use Disorder is a public health issue and requires a coordinated and collaborative approach.
- There are benefits to addressing the simple possession of drugs through health channels rather than a criminal justice response.
- Decriminalization of simple possession of drugs must be preceded by a framework of diversion program options, including voluntary and involuntary options, to provide frontline police with established referral pathways to health, rehabilitation, and recovery support.

Dr. Eileen de Villa

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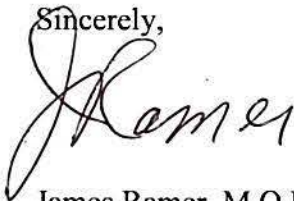
Like the provincial and national associations of chiefs of police, we endorse the decriminalization of personal possession of illicit drugs. **We support a Toronto Public Health request to Health Canada for an exemption to the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and we support a proposed Toronto model as a comprehensive approach to establish an effective network of health and social supports for people who use drugs, provided that:**

- The model for decriminalization of simple possession of drugs in Toronto is developed in conjunction with, and preceded by, an adequately funded framework that will provide for on-demand, wrap around, health and social supports.
- The model for decriminalization of simple drug possession in Toronto must include the establishment of a regulated safe supply of drugs, sanctioned by Health Canada and/or the Ministry of Health, as part of the effort to keep those who use drugs safe, while we attempt to connect them with important health and social services.
- Toronto emergency responders, including Toronto Police Service members, are involved in the diversion process of referral pathways to services.
- The model for decriminalization of simple possession of drugs in Toronto must strike a balance between public health and public safety.
- The Toronto Police Service will remain an active participant and be involved in all future discussions on decriminalization.

We welcome the opportunity to continue this work with Toronto Public Health, people who use drugs, and health and social service providers to support access to services for people who use drugs, as well as to enhance the overall safety and well-being of all Torontonians.

I have consulted with the Toronto Police Service Board on my letter to you today. They have expressed their support for the position I have outlined herein.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Ramer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

James Ramer, M.O.M.
Chief of Police

cc. Chris Murray, City Manager, City of Toronto