

# Understanding the challenges of the opioid crisis

Midtown community conversation May 17, 2021



# Land Acknowledgement



We acknowledge the land we are on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

# Constructive conversation



The purpose of tonight's session is to engage the community in a constructive conversation about the difficult issues around opioid overdoses, drug use and the impact on our community and the people who live, work and learn here.

Please keep your comments concise, constructive and considerate of other views. Please do not use hurtful or hateful language that would further victimize people; please be respectful to the presenters and to each other.

# Tonight's Speakers



- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Gord Tanner   | Director, Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention,<br>Shelter Support and Housing Administration, City of Toronto |
| Shaun Hopkins | Manager, Needle Exchange,<br>Toronto Public Health  |
| Steph Massey  | Manager, Peer Program Development,<br>The Neighbourhood Group / St. Stephens                                      |
| Ben Brown     | Shift Lead<br>Shelter Hotel Overdose Prevention Project (SHOPP)   |
| Bruce Davis   | Facilitator,<br>Public Progress   |



- Toronto has the largest shelter system in Canada with more than 6,000 people using services nightly.
- As part of the City's response to COVID-19 the City has:
  - opened more than 25 temporary response sites to provide additional space for physical distancing and for people to move indoors from encampments, providing up to 3,000 spaces in temporary shelters and hotel programs
  - developed a three-tier approach to strengthening prevention against COVID-19 in the emergency shelter system. These tiers are prevention, mitigation, and recovery.

# Why are we here?



- Canada is in the midst of an overdose crisis inside a pandemic inside an affordable housing crisis.
- Estimates are that there were 500+ opioid related overdoses in Toronto in 2020, up from about 300 overdoses in the past two years.
- Toronto is on track to exceed 650 opioid-related overdoses in 2021
- What has played a part in the opioid crisis / overdoses? █
  - high rates of opioid prescribing
  - the emergence of strong synthetic opioids in the illegal drug supply
  - Drug toxicity: carfentanil, benzodiazepine and other drugs in drug supply
  - Using drugs alone is single biggest risk factor and this has been exacerbated by COVID 19

# The impact of overdoses



- Overdose deaths affect families and friends (perpetuating trauma) and they also affect the health of first responders, harm reduction workers, shelter workers.
- In 2020, 37 shelter residents died of an overdose. Hundreds of other overdoses were reversed due to the administration of naloxone by shelter staff and first responders. Compare this to 5 overdose deaths in a shelter in 2018.

# Understanding Drug Use and Harm Reduction



- Focuses on drug-related harms, not drug use itself
- Pragmatic; does not require people to cut down or stop using substances
- Looks at problems from a systemic lens
- Benefits people who use drugs, families, and communities impacted by the Drug War
- Human rights-based
- Centers meaningful involvement and engagement of people who use drugs



# Harm Reduction in practice



There are a number of services and supports for people available in Toronto

They include:

- Harm reduction supply distribution, harm reduction training and support
- Overdose prevention, recognition and response training
- Peer or staff witnessing
- Shelter Hotel Specific Wellness checks
- Virtual services on-call consumption support person by phone
- Naloxone distribution
- Peer harm reduction advisory committees
- Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (aka consumption treatment services)
- Managed opioid supply
- Working with people who have lived experience to support / deliver on-site services
- Safe inhalation / smoking space

# What is available at Roehampton ?



## Services at the Roehampton:

- Harm reduction supply distribution, harm reduction training and support ✓
- Overdose prevention, recognition and response training ✓
- Peer or staff witnessing ✓
- Shelter Hotel Specific Wellness checks ✓
- Virtual services on-call consumption support person by phone ✓
- Naloxone distribution ✓
- Working with people who have lived experience to support / deliver on-site services (SHOPP pending)
- peer harm reduction advisory committees
- Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (aka consumption treatment services)
- Managed opioid supply
- Working with people who have lived experience to support / deliver on-site services (SHOPP pending)
- Safe inhalation / smoking space

# The benefits of SHOPP



Shelter Hotel Overdose Prevention Project (SHOPP)

SHOPP Workers have expertise through lived expertise in drug use, harm reduction, and overdose response through lived experience

Trains, supports, and pays people for the work they have been doing for years in the community

SHOPP Workers are shelter residents who have a connection within the community

SHOPP Workers receive training harm reduction, overdose response, conflict resolution, and more

People at risk of overdose can use their drugs in front of, and with the support of, a SHOPP Worker who is trained in overdose prevention and response measures like administering Naloxone, oxygen, CPR, and who can call emergency services if needed



What can **WE** do about the opioid crisis?



# How to join the conversation in Webex



## **To ask your question out loud:**

“Connect audio” at the bottom of the video window

To test your microphone click “Audio & Video” at the top of the video screen and click “Speaker and Microphone Settings...”

To raise your hand - click the “Participants” button on the lower right side, then click the hand symbol at the bottom right of the list of names

Once your hand icon is “raised”, your name will be placed into a queue.

The facilitator will select people in the queue with their hands raised and will unmute the speaker and announce their first name or the digits of their telephone number.

If you are on your phone, press \*3 to raise and unraise your hand and \*6 to unmute your phone

## **To type your question:**

Click the “...” button at the bottom of the video window and select “Q&A”

Type your question in the box on the lower right-hand of your screen + click send



For more information about getting involved please visit and contact details online:

[www.toronto.ca/roehampton](http://www.toronto.ca/roehampton)

Email: [clc.roehampton.residence@gmail.com](mailto:clc.roehampton.residence@gmail.com) Site Lead: (437) 247-2287 [www.toronto.ca/overdoseprevention](http://www.toronto.ca/overdoseprevention)

## **Housing and Homelessness Reports**

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/?accordion=street-needs-assessments>

## **Board of Health report Opioid Poisoning Crisis**

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-158017.pdf>

## **Board of Health Recommendations**

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL23.2>

## **Supportive Housing**

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/housing-support-services/>

## **Modular Housing Initiative**

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/modular-housing-initiative/>

# Other ways to get involved



- Donate old phones (they can be used as a peer-support tool)
- Donate snacks / Gatorade to support people recovering from overdose
- Counter the negative stereotypes, stigma and discrimination about people who use drugs

## **Further Reading:**

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325991184\\_Characterizing\\_peer\\_roles\\_in\\_an\\_overdose\\_crisis\\_Preferences\\_for\\_peer\\_workers\\_in\\_overdose\\_response\\_programs\\_in\\_emergency\\_shelters](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325991184_Characterizing_peer_roles_in_an_overdose_crisis_Preferences_for_peer_workers_in_overdose_response_programs_in_emergency_shelters)  
-Geoff Bardwell

<https://torontoharmreductionalliance.ca/>

<https://www.streethealth.ca/external-resources/harm-reduction-resources>

<https://www.hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction>

<http://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

<http://drugpolicy.ca/issues/harm-reduction/>

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. (2006). "Nothing About Us Without Us" Greater, meaningful involvement of people who use illegal drugs: a public health, ethical, and human rights imperative.

<http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Greater+Involvement+-+Bklt+-+Drug+Policy+-+ENG.pdf>

Poster manifesto

[https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/Intl%20Manifesto%20Nothing%20About%20Us%20%2528May%202008%2529\\_0.pdf](https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/Intl%20Manifesto%20Nothing%20About%20Us%20%2528May%202008%2529_0.pdf)

Native Youth Sexual Health Network *Indigenizing Harm Reduction* <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/indigenizingharmreduction.html>