



Motion

Re: Opioid Crisis

“Whereas the opioid crisis is one of the largest public health emergencies of our lifetime, with an average of 6 deaths per day in Ontario in 2020 (a 60% rise from 2019) and a death toll of nearly 20,000 across Canada and nearly 7000 in Ontario (January 2016 to September 2020);

And Whereas the vast majority of opioid deaths are accidental, which has only increased in the pandemic period (to 96% of deaths), fentanyl directly contributed to 87% of deaths during the pandemic and nearly three out of four deaths occur with no one present to respond;

And Whereas the number of confirmed opioid toxicity deaths in Chatham-Kent nearly tripled from 6 deaths in 2019 to 15 deaths in 2020;

And Whereas the rate of emergency department visits due to opioid poisoning in Chatham-Kent has increased significantly over the last 5 years and in 2020 Chatham-Kent experienced some of the highest rates in the province;

And Whereas many opioid poisonings go unreported due to the highly criminalized and stigmatized nature of substance use;

And Whereas several gaps in harm reduction services have been identified for Chatham-Kent through assessment and consultation with frontline service providers, people who use drugs, and their families, including lack of access to overdose prevention sites, safer supply, and resources for peer-led substance use work;

And Whereas other countries have significantly reduced drug-related fatalities with reforms such as legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply and decriminalization for personal use;

And Whereas the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have stated that they agree the evidence clearly states “decriminalization for simple possession as an effective way to reduce the public health and public safety harms associated with substance use”, causing the government to indicate that it is now “deliberating” over decriminalization;

And Whereas the federal government has indicated it is premature to discuss these measures until there are comprehensive supports for people to get well;

And Whereas supports are needed, but measures that save lives are essential if people are to survive and access supports;

And Whereas the overdose crisis rages, showing few signs of abating.

Therefore be it resolved that the Mayor write to the Government of Canada, in particular the Minister of Health on behalf of Council, requesting the following:

1. That the Government of Canada declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency and that the crisis be met with the same urgency observed in the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic,
2. That the federal government decriminalize the possession of all drugs for personal use, and scale up prevention, harm reduction and treatment services.

And be it further resolved that the Mayor on behalf of Council, request Community Human Services provide a presentation to Council regarding the opioid crisis in Chatham-Kent.

And be it further resolved that the Mayor send this resolution to the Premier of Ontario, Provincial Minister of Health, the Attorney General, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, area municipalities, and Boards of Health.

Signed: Councillor Amy Finn

Notice Given On: June 14, 2021