



The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
Report: #2023-INFO-33
Date: April 28, 2023

Subject:

Mental Health and Opioids in Durham Region

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on local trends and strategies to address mental health and opioids in Durham Region.

2. Background

2.1 On March 27, 2023, the co-chairs of the federal, provincial, and territorial Special Advisory Committee on the Epidemic of Opioid Overdoses [issued a statement](#) on the release of [the latest surveillance data](#) on opioid and stimulant related harms in Canada.

2.2 In Ontario, the impact of mental health, mental illness, and addictions on life expectancy, quality of life, and health care utilization is more than 1.5 times that of all cancers and more than 7 times that of all infectious diseases.

2.3 Public Health Units (PHU's) do not oversee or provide mental illness treatment programs or substance use treatment programs. In Durham Region, mental health and addiction treatment services are funded by Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health (MOH) and delivered by several health professionals within the community, including:

- a. Primary care providers, hospitals, and community agencies such as:
 - Canadian Mental Health Association, Durham (CMHA Durham)

- Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS).
 - Lakeridge Health, including Pinewood Centre.
 - Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores).
 - [Rapid Access Addiction Medicine](#) (RAAM) clinics, methadone clinics, private treatment facilities, and service hubs.
- 2.4 There are many local front-line mental health and addictions services offering acute and long-term support for those experiencing mental health issues or requiring crisis intervention (see Attachment #1).
- 2.5 In accordance with the [Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability](#) (OPHS) under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#), Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) is mandated to fulfill requirements under the [Mental Health Promotion Guideline](#) and the [Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Guideline](#).
- a. DRHD delivers services that provide upstream interventions to reduce the burden of mental illnesses and addictions and promote positive mental health, resiliency, and well-being across the lifespan.
 - b. DRHD delivers services using a [comprehensive health promotion approach](#) focused on primary prevention and harm reduction. Substance use related primary prevention aims to prevent or delay substance use. Harm reduction aims to reduce harms associated with use and refers to policies, programs and practices to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption.
- 2.6 In August 2022, the Association of Municipalities in Ontario submitted its recommendations for an integrated response to mental health and addictions to the MOH in [An Integrated Approach to Mental Health and Addictions](#).
- ### 3. Local Trends
- 3.1 According to the [Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System](#), between 2014 to 2018, 69 per cent of Durham residents aged 18+ rated their mental health as excellent or very good.
- a. Less residents in Lakeview (59 per cent), downtown Ajax (55 per cent), and downtown Oshawa (54 per cent) rated their mental health as excellent or very good when compared to Durham Region.
- 3.2 According to the [Canadian Community Health Survey](#), in 2018:
- a. 18 per cent of Durham residents aged 12+ needed help for their mental health, including for alcohol or drug use, compared to 14 per cent in Ontario.
 - b. 62 per cent of Durham residents aged 12+ who needed mental health care reported that their need for care was met (53 per cent in Ontario).

- c. 11 per cent of Durham residents (approximately 61,000 people) aged 12+ reported they experienced mood disorder, which is comparable to Ontario at 10 per cent.
 - d. 12 per cent of Durham residents (approximately 68,000 people) aged 12+ reported they experienced anxiety disorder, compared to 10 per cent in Ontario.
- 3.3 Each year, Lakeridge Health has more than 100,000 mental health visits for adults, more than 12,000 visits for children and youth, and more than 14,000 visits to its emergency departments related to mental health and substance use.
- 3.4 DRHD has the seventh lowest opioid toxicity mortality rate compared to all 34 Ontario PHUs, as reported in the [Preliminary Patterns in Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) report.
- 3.5 Local data available on the [Durham Region Opioid Information System](#) show that:
- a. In 2022, approximately 573 suspected opioid overdose calls were received by Region of Durham Paramedic Services (RDPS), which is a decrease compared to 998 calls in 2021, and 725 calls in 2020. The majority of RDPS calls were in Oshawa.
 - b. There was a general decrease in the monthly number of confirmed opioid overdose emergency department visits by Durham Region residents in 2022.
 - c. There were approximately 78 opioid-related deaths among Durham Region residents from January to December 2022. This is a decrease from 130 deaths in 2021.
 - d. There has been a notable trend locally and provincially related to individuals who use substances shifting away from injection methods and choosing inhalation methods.
- 4. Funding**
- 4.1 The [2023 Federal Budget](#) included funding allocated towards suicide prevention efforts and a renewed Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy with a focus on combatting the opioid crisis (see Attachment #2).
- 4.2 In 2020, the [Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System](#) was launched. It is a guide to build a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system that is easier to navigate and access.
- a. A new [Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence](#) will support Ontario in building a comprehensive and connected mental health addictions system. It will play a critical role in the provincial oversight of delivery and quality of mental health and addictions services and supports.

- 4.3 The Province announced that the [2023 Ontario Budget](#) will include [an additional \\$425 million](#) over three years towards mental health and addictions programs and services (see Attachment #3).
- 4.4 In June 2022, one time funding was received from the MOH to enhance outreach services for the Needle Syringe Program. The funding supports a pilot project for peer outreach services to provide services, education, and support to those precariously housed or unhoused.

5. Local Highlights and Actions

- 5.1 In 2020, Lakeridge Health and DMHS integrated their operations to better coordinate services. DMHS was able to support Lakeridge Health with a range of mental health services, including three crisis locations and eight group homes across Durham Region.
- 5.2 The [Durham Region Opioid Response Plan](#) was first developed by the [Durham Region Opioid Task Force](#) in 2017 and updated in 2022.
- a. DRHD co-chairs the Task Force which is comprised of members from agencies that provide harm reduction and/or treatment services, first responders, individual residents with lived experience, school boards, and health care professionals.
- 5.3 The current focus of the Opioid Task Force is to leverage existing services to address identified gaps at the local level. In circumstances where it is not feasible to leverage existing services, due to financial and/or resource constraints, advocacy options and other strategies are considered.
- 5.4 DRHD provides the following services and programs related to mental health and opioids:
- a. School services and youth engagement – DRHD staff provides support to all schools within Durham Region. Services include innovative and varied comprehensive strategies to promote mental health, prevent substance use, and address risk and protective factors such as social inclusion and social determinants of health.
 - b. Parenting services and support – DRHD staff provides parenting support, including support to community groups and in-home visits to foster parent/child connectedness, infant and child health, and healthy family dynamics. Public health nurses conduct postnatal depression assessments and future programming will include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions for new parents/caregivers in a group setting.
 - c. Population health strategies including community assessments, education and awareness raising efforts, skill building activities and community engagement on issues and concerns.

- d. Education on safer drug practices along with the distribution of safer drug use supplies. Efforts also focus on providing a point of access into health and social services for clients who may not otherwise have access to such services.
 - e. Consultation and collaboration with stakeholders in the health, education, municipal, non-governmental, and other relevant sectors, including Ontario Health. Key collaborative groups, networks and organizations include:
 - Lakeridge Health – Integrated Mental Health and Addictions Planning Committee and Emergency Care Working Group.
 - Durham’s Child & Youth Planning Network – [Youth Suicide Prevention Durham](#).
 - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Perinatal Mood Disorder (PMD) Community of Practice.
 - Durham District School Board – School Mental Health Steering Committee.
- 5.5 In November 2021, the Region of Durham released the [Community Safety and Well-Being \(CSWB\) Plan](#). Mental health and substance use are among the seven priority risk factors of the CSWB Plan. The plan creates a framework to intentionally align existing relationships, plans, and strategies at the regional, area municipal, and community level to make the best use of resources, avoid duplication, learn best practices, and facilitate effective cross-sectoral collaboration. DRHD is actively involved in the work of the CSWB Plan.
- a. The [CSWB Plan Data Dashboard](#) integrates data from many community data sources to provide a thorough, real-time, snapshot of local data including mental health and substance use.
- 5.6 DRHD implemented the ‘People who Use Drugs are Real People’ campaign in the fall of 2022 to reduce stigma and promote harm reduction and treatment services.
- 5.7 Over the past several years, many partnerships and new strategies have formed because of the Opioid Task Force’s work, including:
- a. Enhanced outreach services to Downtown Oshawa, funded by Lakeridge Health and DRHD (2018).
 - b. Implementation of the [On-Point Needle Collection Project](#) which is a partnership between Social Services, DRHD, and John Howard Society (2019).
 - c. [Enhanced public education](#) regarding substance use disorder and problematic substance use.
 - d. Development and launch of the Opioid Alert System to alert front line workers and agencies about a statistically significant increase in paramedic calls for suspected opioid overdoses.

- e. The [Durham Region Opioid Information System](#) which provides the latest local statistics, including paramedic services calls, emergency department visits and opioid related overdoses.
 - f. Completion of a service mapping exercise to clearly identify the service pathways for individuals who have contact with Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) and enter custody, as well as service calls related to a non-criminal offence. As a result of the service mapping exercise, further collaboration has taken place with Durham Region Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP) and DRPS to identify strategies to address police calls related to non-criminal offences.
 - g. Development and launch of Lakeridge Health's [Together, Best Mental Health: Mental Health and Substance Use Services Strategy \(2022-2025\)](#).
 - The strategy advances mental health and substance use services in Durham Region to create a central point of intake, access, and navigation into all outpatient mental health, Pinewood Centre, and DMHS programs.
 - h. Launch of the [Report Drugs Durham](#) tool that allows the public to anonymously report a bad or unexpected reaction to a street drug.
 - i. Active participation on the Central East Opioid Strategy Table, which influenced the creation and launch of RAAM services in Oshawa, and development of the Opioid Navigator role at Lakeridge Health.
- 5.8 To support enhanced access to opioid addiction treatment, reduce drug related harms, and support long term recovery, DRHD staff will be working with Lakeridge Health and other key stakeholders to promote access to safe supply/opioid agonist therapy.
- 5.9 Durham Region provides [housing-focused street outreach](#) to help people accept offers of help with housing while meeting basic needs to ensure people can move from unsheltered homelessness to housing.
- 5.10 Durham Region is exploring a [Non-Police Led Mental Health Crisis Response Service](#). The service would aim to offer a new approach to crisis intervention, led by mental health professionals. Community engagement activities were planned and are now complete.
- 5.11 [Access MHA](#), funded by the Province, provides regional mental health and addictions service referral and coordination for people that require support in eastern Ontario. Currently the service is available to those in Ottawa, Pembroke, Cornwall, Hawkesbury and surrounding areas. In future years, the service will expand further west and include additional eastern Ontario regions, including Durham Region.

6. Previous Reports

- 6.1 Report [2021-INFO-60](#) provided an update on the report: [Changing Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), released on May 19, 2021.
- 6.2 Report [2022-INFO-10](#) provided an update on the report: [Patterns of Medication and Healthcare Use Among People Who Died of Opioid-Related Toxicity During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ontario](#), released on January 18, 2022.
- 6.3 Report [2022-INFO-67](#) provided an update on the report: [Lives Lost to Opioid Toxicity Among Ontarians Who Worked in the Construction Industry](#), released on July 27, 2022.
- 6.4 Report [2023-INFO-26](#) provided information on the appearance of benzodiazepines and xylazine in the unregulated drug supply.

7. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 7.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
 - a. Goal 2: Community Vitality:
 - Enhance community safety and well-being.
 - Influence the social determinants of health to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.
 - Support a high quality of life for all through human services delivery.
 - b. Goal 5: Service Excellence:
 - Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.
 - Collaborate for a seamless service experience.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 DRHD will continue to engage stakeholders and Durham Region Opioid Task Force members to ensure a coordinated, evidence-based strategy is employed at the local level to address drug poisonings.
- 8.2 DRHD will release the Opioid Response Plan Status Report to the public in June 2023.
- 8.3 DRHD will continue to provide programs and services, as per the OPHS.

9. Attachments

Attachment #1: Key Mental Health and Addictions Services in Durham Region

Attachment #2: 2023 Federal Budget Highlights

Attachment #3: 2023 Ontario Budget Highlights

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Attachment #1 Key Mental Health and Addictions Services in Durham Region

211 Ontario:

- Connects individuals to social services and community programs including mental health and addiction, homelessness, health care, housing, newcomers, youth, older adults, employment assistance, abuse, emergency/crisis etc.

AIDS Committee of Durham Region:

- Provides naloxone and naloxone training, harm reduction services, fentanyl drug test kits, counselling, outreach, peer support, and equipment/supply clean-up.

Back Door Mission:

- Mission United provides wrap-around support services to individuals in Durham Region who are dealing with homelessness, housing insecurity, mental health and addiction concerns, and food access challenges.

Canadian Mental Health Association Durham:

- Community mental health services including nurse practitioner-led clinic and assertive community treatment team for people 18-65 with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

Carea Community Health Centre:

- Offers services and programs addressing mental health including a walk-in counselling clinic for children and youth ages 3-19 years and their families, and brief counselling services (6-12 sessions) to individuals, families, and couples.

Community Care Durham:

- Community Care Durham (CCD) is a multi-service registered charitable organization providing a broad range of support services for individuals over the age of 16 including mental health supports, food security programming, health and wellness etc.

Connex Ontario:

- Ontario-wide information and referral for people experiencing mental health and/or addiction issues. Service is provided 24/7/365 by toll-free telephone, email, text, or web chat. Funded by the Government of Ontario.

COPE Mental Health | Community Care Durham:

- Community-based program that supports adults with mental health concerns to live in their community. The goal is to assist adults aged 16 and up with emotional or mental health concerns to remain in the community and function as effectively as possible while maximizing their quality of life.

Cornerstone:

- 24-hour emergency shelter to men aged 16 years and above who are currently homeless – max. 7 day stay.
- Services include assistance securing a source of income, housing search, referrals to community resources, mental health support and referral, crisis supports, and identification replacement.

Durham Mental Health Services:

- Short term crisis beds, 24-hour crisis line, residential programs, housing support, community outreach programs including mobile crisis team, justice initiatives, seniors support.
- Services individuals 16+ with a history of mental illness.

Durham Regional Police Service - Mental Health Support Unit (MHSU):

- Consists of five teams, each comprised of a police constable partnered with a registered nurse from Lakeridge Health. MHSU provides daily coverage between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m.
- MHSU is a secondary response unit, providing support to front line officers.

Lakeridge Health:

- Lakeridge Health is one of Ontario's largest hospital systems, and operates the province's second-largest mental health and addictions program.
- Child, Youth and Family Program (CYFP) provides services for children and adolescents, aged 5 to 18, who are struggling with serious mental health issues. Services include crisis intervention, inpatient unit and outpatient services.
- The Adult Mental Health Program at Lakeridge Health provides support for adults 18 and over who are struggling with serious mental health issues. Services include crisis intervention, an inpatient unit and outpatient services at the Lakeridge Health Oshawa site and many community locations.

Lakeridge Health's Pinewood Centre:

- Provides a variety of services to help people with alcohol, drug, concurrent mental health and gambling related concerns. Treatment services include residential withdrawal management services, residential treatment services, structured community-based individual and group services, and walk-in and telephone support.

Lakeridge Health's Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinics:

- Offers fast access to quality care for people living with alcohol and opioid-related addictions. Services include medical treatment and counselling services without a doctor's referral.

Distress Centre Ontario:

- Offers 24-hour text/live talk helpline, crisis call-out program, community contact call-out program, suicide survivor support groups, community training/education.

Metis Nation of Ontario:

- Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) offers a 24-hour Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line.
- Services include culturally specific Métis health and addiction supports for adults, youth, and families in Ontario.

Mental Health Outreach Program (MHOP):

- Offers mobile outreach counselling/psychotherapy across Durham.
- Social worker visits local and north communities including Cannington, Uxbridge, Port Perry & Beaverton once a month to offer community supports and referrals.
- Program within Family Services Durham.

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences:

- Ontario Shores is a public teaching hospital providing a range of specialized assessment and treatment services to those living with complex and serious mental illness.
- Ontario Shores offers specialized recovery-focused interprofessional programs and services designed to provide successful treatment as interprofessional teams work with patients and families throughout their journey of recovery. Assessment and crisis services are provided, as well as consultation and education.

Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP) – mobile team across Durham:

- Consists of an advanced care paramedic and a social worker, working with community partners to deliver services to vulnerable populations. Paramedic provides medical assessments, triage and interventions and the social worker provides client engagement and assessment, service navigation and referrals to community supports, such as addiction and mental health agencies, and counselling for crises, depression, substance abuse, attempted suicide, trauma, and other health concerns.
- The PCOP team travels to various priority neighbourhoods providing services Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Attachment #2 2023 Federal Budget Highlights

[988 Suicide Prevention Line](#)

Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$158.4 million over three years, starting in 2023-24, to the Public Health Agency of Canada to support the implementation and operation of 988. As of November 30, 2023, Canadians will be able to call or text 988 at any time to access quality, effective, and immediate suicide prevention and mental health crisis support.

[Renewed Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy](#)

Budget 2023 proposes to provide a total of \$359.2 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, with \$5.7 million ongoing and \$1.3 million in remaining amortization, to support a renewed Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy. This includes:

- \$144 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to Health Canada for the Substance Use and Addictions Program to fund community-based supports, including safer supply, supervised consumption sites, and other evidence-based health interventions.
- \$20.2 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to the Public Health Agency of Canada for a new community-based program to prevent substance use among young people.
- \$73.9 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, with \$4.6 million ongoing, to Health Canada to streamline authorizations for supervised consumption sites and drug checking services, scale-up access to safer supply, and evaluate innovative approaches.
- \$50.8 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, with \$1.1 million ongoing and \$1.3 million in remaining amortization, to Health Canada; and \$16 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to the Public Health Agency of Canada to support vital data collection on substance-related harms and lab-based analysis of the illegal drug supply.
- \$4.6 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to Public Safety Canada to develop an overdose monitoring app for paramedics and other first responders.
- \$42 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; \$6.2 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to Public Services and Procurement Canada; and \$1.6 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, sourced from existing resources to Global Affairs Canada to take further action to work with our partners to tackle drug trafficking and stem the global flow of these devastating substances.

Attachment #3 2023 Ontario Budget Highlights

Ontario launched [Roadmap to Wellness](#) to better connect people to mental health services that are convenient for them. Building on this investment of \$3.8 billion over 10 years, the government is providing an additional \$425 million over three years, mainly to:

- Support mental health programs that are community-led and delivered, making it more convenient for people to connect to mental health services closer to home.
- Make a broad range of addictions services available across Ontario that are easy to access and there when needed.
- Support children and youth, by providing access to mental health and addictions services, primary care, and social and community supports to youth aged 12-25 through Youth Wellness Hubs.
- Support for children and youth suffering from eating disorders, including inpatient and specialized outpatient services.
- Identify the data and digital health needs of service providers to deliver better care for clients.
- Maintain supportive housing and services for people living with mental health and addictions challenges as they transition from hospital to the community.
- Work with Indigenous partners and communities to maintain co-developed programs and services that support Indigenous people's access to high-quality, culturally appropriate care.
- Provide community-based mental health and addictions service providers, funded by the MOH, with a five per cent increase in base funding.