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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
Report: #2024-INFO-44
Date: July 12, 2024

Subject:

The Opioid Crisis: A Municipal Perspective

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on the report entitled: [The Opioid Crisis: A Municipal Perspective](#), one of two reports released by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) on July 2, 2024.

2. Background

2.1 AMO collaborated with key partners from the health, justice, business, and social services sectors and those with lived experiences to develop a report which seeks to re-focus attention on evidence-based solutions across prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction to address the opioid crisis.

2.2 AMO provided the following resources to support the report: [data](#) from the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network on opioid deaths by public health unit and municipalities across Ontario, [key messages](#) from the report, and [social media cards](#) for municipalities to support AMO's release of its report.

3. Report Key Messages

3.1 Nearly 60 per cent of people who died from opioid toxicity were employed and one-third of these people worked in the construction industry.

- 3.2 Opioid-related deaths affect 88 per cent of urban Indigenous People in Ontario. First Nations have a mortality rate approximately four times higher than the rest of the population.
- 3.3 Almost 50 per cent of people who died from opioid-related toxicity have not been diagnosed with opioid use disorder in the previous five years.
- 3.4 Between 2013 to 2021, the rate of opioid-related deaths among youth increased by more than 360 per cent.
 - a. It should be noted that Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) staff continues to review provincial and local data. Both provincially and locally, opioid toxicity deaths among youth peaked in 2021 but preliminary data show the rates decreased in 2022.
- 3.5 The report states that municipalities are at the front-line of addressing the toxic drug crisis and advocates for the need for provincial leadership, resources, and meaningful action.
- 3.6 AMO recommends the following actions across the four pillars of prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction:
 - a. Addressing the opioid crisis long-term requires investment in prevention strategies that are culturally relevant and provincial action on the social determinants of health (SDOH) to address income security and affordable housing.
 - b. There must be a comprehensive approach to treatment that includes a range of holistic and evidence-based options.
 - c. First-responders require enhanced support, such as training on mental health and addictions, in addition to building capacity for connecting people with treatment.
 - d. Evidence shows that supervised consumption sites help save lives and should be approved and funded based on demonstrated local need and community engagement. There is also emerging evidence that safer supply programs are having a positive impact on both individuals and communities.

4. Local Program Initiatives

- 4.1 Locally, DRHD partakes in harm reduction activities, including the needle syringe program, the opioid patch return program, naloxone distribution, and support programs for sex trade workers. More information on [harm reduction programming](#) and information and resources on safe needle disposal can be found on [durham.ca](#).
- 4.2 DRHD provides information regarding the risks associated with opioids and drugs, including information on overdose prevention, recommendations for reducing usage

and community resources and services for individuals looking for help, available at durham.ca.

- 4.3 Local health statistics and information on drug use can be found on the [Durham Health Stats](#) webpage.
- 4.4 DRHD provides mental health resources and supports, including information on crises, available at durham.ca.
- 4.5 To address the local opioid crisis, the Durham Region Opioid Task Force continues to work on implementing the objectives identified in the [Durham Region Opioid Response Plan](#).
- 4.6 The [Durham Region Opioid Information System \(DROIS\)](#) is an online tool that provides the latest opioid overdose-related statistics, including Region of Durham Paramedic Services calls.
- 4.7 Information and local trends on the following are available on durham.ca:
 - a. Comparison of benzodiazepine overdose emergency department visits in Durham Region and Ontario categorized by age and sex are available [here](#).
 - b. Comparison of early substance use – alcohol (December 2017) in Durham Region and Ontario are available [here](#).
 - c. Comparison of past year alcohol use (December 2017) in Durham Region and Ontario are available [here](#).
 - d. Comparison of percentage of secondary school students reporting substance use before Grade nine (2016-2017) in Durham Region and Ontario are available [here](#).
- 4.8 Individuals and community organizations can use the [Report Drugs Durham Tool](#) to anonymously report a bad or unexpected reaction to drugs.

5. Previous Reports

- 5.1 Report [2020-INFO-114](#) provided an update on the report: [Preliminary Patterns in Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).
- 5.2 Report [2021-INFO-60](#) provided an update on the report: [Changing Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).
- 5.3 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](#).

- 5.4 Report [2022-INFO-67](#) provided an update on the report: [Lives Lost to Opioid Toxicity among Ontarians Who Worked in the Construction Industry](#).
- 5.5 Report [2023-INFO-47](#) provided information on the application process for Consumption and Treatment Services in Ontario.
- 5.6 Report [2023-INFO-60](#) provided an update on the report: [Opioid Toxicity and Access to Treatment among Adolescents and Young Adults in Ontario](#).
- 5.7 Report [2023-INFO-83](#) provided an update on the report: [Characteristics of Substance-Related Toxicity Deaths in Ontario: Stimulant, Opioid, Benzodiazepine, and Alcohol-Related Deaths](#).
- 5.8 Report [2024-INFO-16](#) provided an update on the report: [Prescribing Patterns, Substance Use Disorder Diagnoses, and Access to Treatment Prior to Substance-Related Toxicity Deaths in Ontario](#).
- 5.9 Report [2024-INFO-43](#) provided an update on the report: [Opioid-Related Toxicity Deaths Within Ontario Shelters: Circumstances of Death and Prior Medication & Healthcare Use](#).

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with the following strategic goal and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

a. Goal 2: Community Vitality

- 2.3: Enhance community safety and well-being
- 2.4: Influence the social determinants of health to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations

7. Conclusion

7.1 AMO's report highlights that the opioid crisis is complex and interconnected with income insecurity, lack of affordable housing, intergenerational trauma carried by Indigenous communities and insufficient investment in broader mental health and addictions supports.

7.2 AMO advocates for a need for a multi-faceted strategy that addresses the SDOH, provides long-term investment in prevention, and appropriately supports treatment, enforcement and harm reduction approaches.

7.3 AMO highlights the need for provincial support to take concrete action to support Ontario's residents and communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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