May 25, 2022

Ontario Premier Doug Ford,

Christine Elliot, Ontario Minister of Health

Merrilee Fullerton, Ontario Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party

Steven Del Duca, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party

Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario

Re: **The Poisoned Drug Crisis**

Dear Ontario Political Leaders,

I am deeply disturbed by the recent report from the Chief Coroner that 2,819 Ontarians died from opioid toxicity in 2021 (8 per day!). That’s up from 2,460 in 2020. We desperately need a coordinated provincial strategy to address this EMERGENCY.

Though all levels of government share responsibility for the 8 Ontarians who will die today, the province has a key role to play. I believe Ontario should:

1. Immediately focus resources and public resolve to end this crisis by declaring the opioid overdose crisis a Public Health Emergency and reinstating the Emergency Task Force.
2. Eliminate the de-humanizing ‘trap’ of poverty that drives so many people to seek solace from alcohol and other substances. Every Ontarian should have the income needed to cover living costs. This could be through guaranteeing a livable income for all, or a ‘living’ minimum wage with substantially increased OW & ODSP levels, or subsidizing rent-geared-to-income and supportive housing.
3. Create widely available and fully funded mental health services to help Ontarians who are struggling with substance use to:
* Access safe, supported services, open 24/7, to safely consume substances they need;
* Access full and non-stigmatizing comprehensive healthcare; and
* Access low barrier, culturally safe, accessible treatment when they are ready to reduce or end their use of potentially harmful street purchased substances.
1. Work with all levels of government to address the need for safer supply of psychoactive drugs.

All parties and levels of government need to work together on this drug poisoning **EMERGENCY**, so I copy other elected representatives and ministers.

Sincerely,

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Address or postal code

cc: Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos, federal Minister of Health

Honorable Carolyn Bennett, federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

Toronto Mayor, John Tory

Toronto Board of Health Vice Chair, Stephanie Donaldson