Nov 10, 2022

Doug Ford, Ontario Premier

Re: **The Poisoned Drug Crisis**

Dear Premier Ford,

I am deeply disturbed by the Chief Coroner’s report that 2,819 Ontarians died from opioid toxicity in 2021 (8 per day!). That’s up from 2,460 in 2020 (and 556 in 2011). 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 poisoned drug crisis a **Public Health Emergency**, as BC did in 2016.
2. Immediately reinstate the **Emergency Task Force** on this issue, with broad representation including harm reduction workers and people who use drugs, not just people who work in addiction medicine.
3. Immediately support Toronto Public Health’s 15 month old request for a federal exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to de-criminalize possession of small quantities of drugs. Simultaneously strongly encourage federal action on this matter for all of Ontario, and nationwide.
4. Support individual Ontarians (of all income levels) to:
* access safe, supported 24/7 services assisting their safe consumption of needed substances; 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 the federal government to develop an ongoing nationwide supply of safe psychoactive drugs.
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 and substantially increased OW & ODSP levels, or subsidizing rent-geared-to-income and supportive housing programs.
3. Create widely available and fully funded mental health services to help all Ontarians.

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

Sincerely,

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Address or postal code

cc: Sylvia Jones, Ontario Minister of Health

Michael A. Tibollo, Ontario Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

Peter Tabuns, Interim Leader of Ontario’s Official Opposition (NDP)

John Fraser, Interim Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party

Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, federal Minister of Health

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

John Tory, Toronto Mayor

Joe Mihevc, Toronto Board of Health Interim Chair