

# WATERLOO REGION DRUG ACTION TEAM



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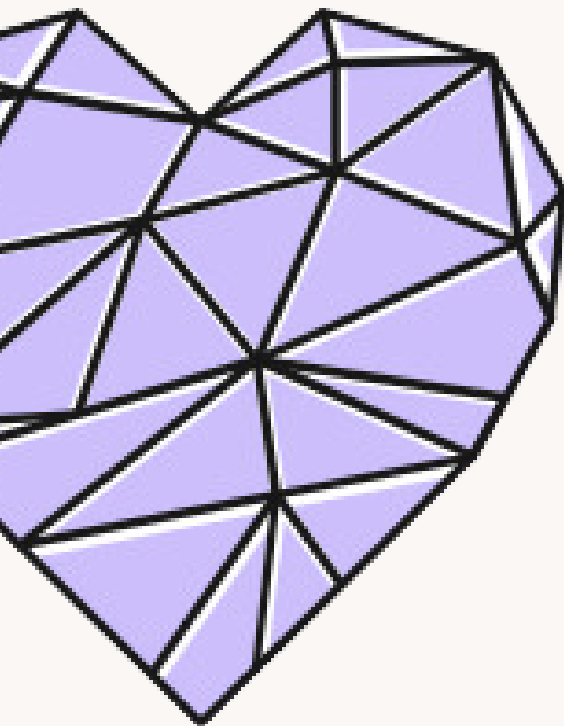
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# ABOUT WR DAT

The Waterloo Region Drug Action Team (WR DAT) consists of Waterloo region residents with interest, experience, and expertise in resolving a wide range of drug-related issues. Our membership includes direct service staff in shelter and outreach environments, drug policy professionals, academics from all 3 area post-secondary institutions, and persons directly affected by drug-related issues, among others.

The WR DAT is volunteer-driven, non-partisan, and receives no government funding. Actually, we receive no financial funding of any kind but we sure would welcome some assistance.



## OUR VISION

Eliminating drug-related risks and harms by advancing evidence-informed drug policies to improve individual and community health and safety in Waterloo Region.

## OUR MISSION

To facilitate systemic change through community collaboration grounded in evidence, equity, and the expertise of people most affected.

## STAY IN TOUCH



Get the latest news from the Waterloo Region Drug Action Team on Twitter (X) at: [@DrugActionTeamWR](https://twitter.com/DrugActionTeamWR)



Check out your website at: [www.drugactionteam.ca](http://www.drugactionteam.ca)



Got something to share? Want to receive newsletters?  
[wdrugactionteam@gmail.com](mailto:wdrugactionteam@gmail.com)

# COME SUPPORT CTS!



SEPTEMBER 30, 7PM: CITY OF KITCHENER COUNCIL



Show some love for patrons and staff of Kitchener's Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS), a **successful initiative that has reduced drug poisoning fatalities, provided critical health and social services**, and, among other benefits, informs the toxic drug-overdose alerts so frequently issued in Waterloo region. The Kitchener CTS reduced the burden on emergency first responders, direct service staff, hospital emergency rooms, and, according to police data, **a number of crimes in the surrounding neighbourhood have declined since it was established in 2019.**

The province is defunding several CTS sites in Ontario, including Kitchener. The 'HART hub' is not a substitute. **The impacts of closure early in 2025 are guaranteed to reduce both individual and community health and safety.**

Consider delegating, or joining with your neighbours to watch the meeting.

To delegate, call 519-741-2200

ext. 7278 or

visit [www.kitchener.ca](http://www.kitchener.ca)

# OVERDOSE ACTION DAY

Just days after local Overdose Awareness Day events in Cambridge and Kitchener, people from across Waterloo region gathered on August 28 at Regional headquarters to call for **urgent action in implementing solutions known to reduce the harms** of the raging public health emergency unfolding locally and beyond. While the WR DAT understands that the province is hostile to progress, **local municipalities are not powerless.**

Hundreds of people gathered to listen to speakers, share food, meet new friends, and later, make their way into a standing-room-only Regional Council meeting alongside area advocates for preserving the farms, farming families and businesses under threat of expropriation by the Region and the province. The WR DAT appreciates the conversations and support from our farming friends, and we extend our best wishes for success in preserving the 800 acres of prime agricultural land for current and future generations.

We appreciate **Sara Escobar's excellent delegation - and the enthusiasm amongst the public in the Council meeting - in support of sensible drug policy and practice in Waterloo region.** You can read the WR DAT letter, and see Sara's delegation, to the Regional Council, [here](#). More information about the on-going Wilmot farms fiasco is [here](#).

A huge thank you to all of the volunteers who assisted to make the event a success - too many people to name suffice to say we are very, very grateful for your efforts. Thanks also to the MPPs and MP who spoke at the Rally. Merci!



# WATERLOO REGION COMMITTEE URGES PROVINCE TO REVERSE CONSUMPTION SERVICES POLICY



SARA ESCOBAR SPEAKING TO  
REGIONAL COUNCIL AUGUST 28

The Waterloo Region Drug Action Team (WR DAT) is pleased to share that Region of Waterloo's Community and Health Services Committee **passed a resolution calling on the Ontario government to reverse their recent, unpopular and unequivocally deadly policy to defund CTS sites, unsupported by evidence**, including 4 review reports by the province. The province is also threatening to introduce legislation in the fall to restrict the freedom of municipalities to advance evidence-informed, life-saving initiatives proven to improve health and safety.



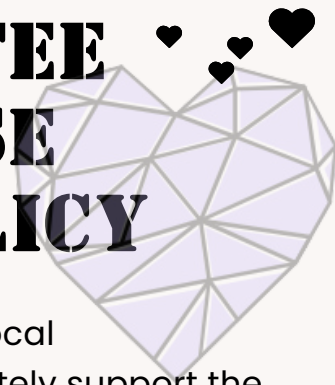
SIMONE MORRISON AT THE  
REGION'S CHS COMMITTEE,  
SEPTEMBER 10

An amendment to the motion calls on the Ontario government to reject potential legislation that would prohibit existing and proposed consumption services approved via a federal exemption process known **Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (UPHNS)**:

*And be it further resolved that the Ontario government does not take steps to pass legislation that would prohibit the establishment of temporary UPHNS.*



# WATERLOO REGION COMMITTEE URGES PROVINCE TO REVERSE CONSUMPTION SERVICES POLICY

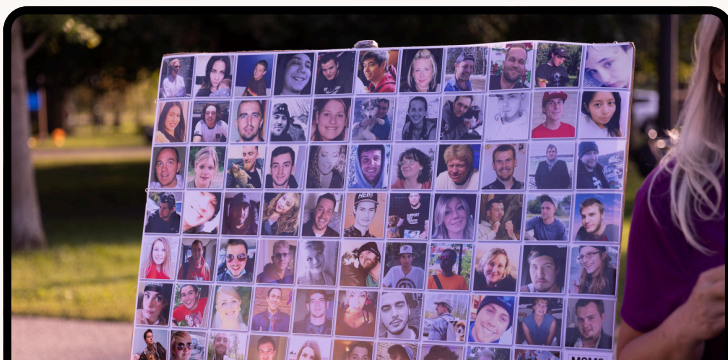


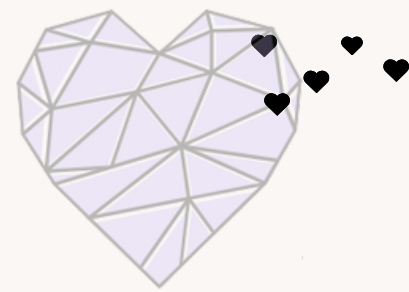
The WR DAT again urges local municipalities to immediately support the establishment of additional UPHNS sites – outside of a 200m school/daycare buffer – to guard against the negative impacts certain to arise after the provinces' forced closure of the CTS in March 2025. **With more than 100 suspected overdose fatalities in Waterloo region thus far in 2024, the community is urgently seeking Regional assistance.** Several Ontario municipalities have, or are, funding and supporting UPHNS consumption sites.

The WR DAT commends Councillor Deutschmann for introducing the motion, and members of the Committee who offered passionate and reasoned comments in support of the motion. The motion passed 12-3 with Councillors Craig, Liggett, and Salonen voting against the motion, and Councillor Harris absent for the vote. The motion will now be forwarded on to the Province of Ontario.

The WR DAT also commends the delegates and others who took time out of their day to attend the meeting – thank you for providing advice and support to the Committee. Thanks also to area municipal and regional Councillors who have reached out to WR DAT.

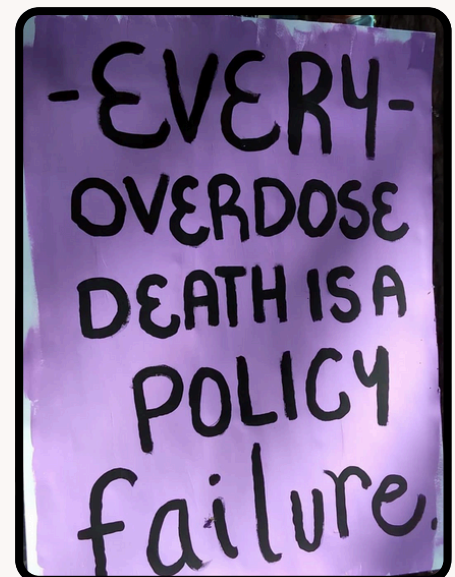
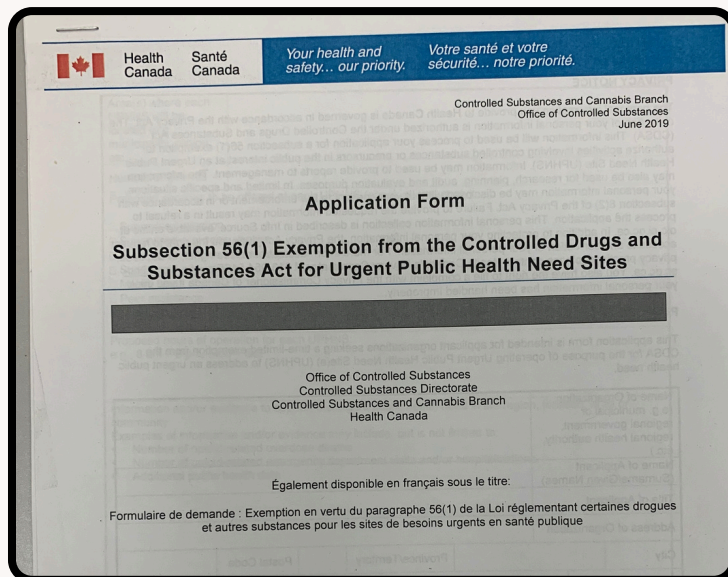
**The WR DAT provided a letter to Committee supporting the motion, which you can read in the Committee agenda or [here](#).** A recording of the meeting on YouTube is [here](#) if you wish to watch the delegations and comments by the Committee. All of the local media outlets covered the motion.





# WHAT IS A UPHNS?

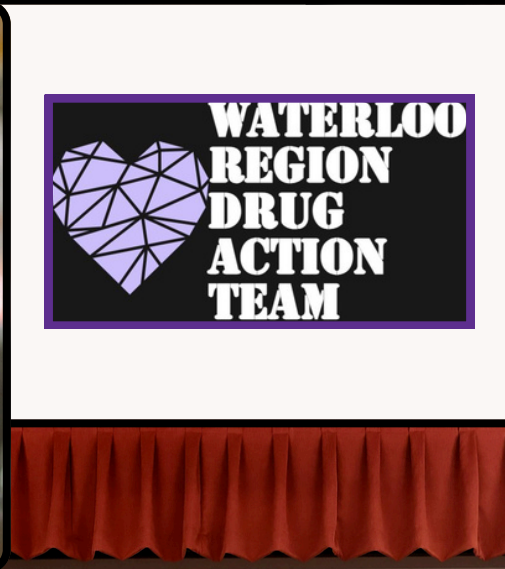
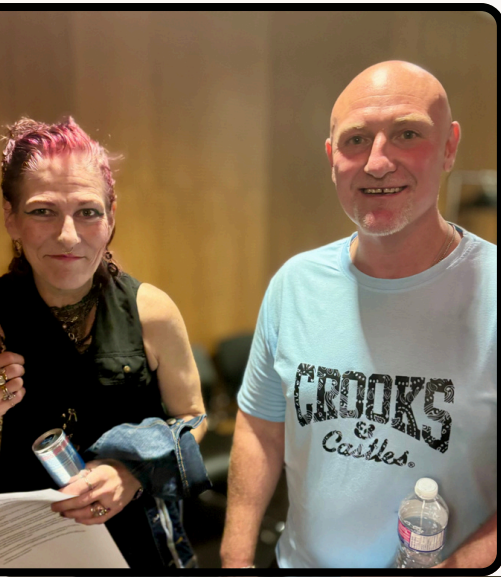
For years, the WR DAT has encouraged the Region and others to support private or public consumption services via an abbreviated application process – the **Urgent Public Health Needs Site** – provided federally by Health Canada. Any organization can apply if there is a demonstrated need. Several Ontario municipalities have provided full funding for a publicly available consumption service.



The recent threat to restrict the freedom of municipalities to advance proven drug-related initiatives via provincial legislation includes a potential ban on any type of consumption service, safer supply initiatives, and decriminalization efforts.

The WR DAT recommends the establishment of UPHNS sites –200m away schools and daycare facilities– be **expedited by local municipalities in advance of any provincial legislation** in the late fall. A UPHNS site would mitigate the negative impacts of defunding Sanguen Health Centre’s CTS site– but local municipalities must act quickly to support community efforts. Doing nothing is guaranteed to result in deaths and other harms.

# SAFER SUPPLY FILM AND CONVERSATION



PRESENTERS AND PANELISTS:  
CAROLYN, MEGAN, JENNAE, DANNY,  
SCOTT, MICHAEL, SIMONE, JESSE





# BEAR WITNESS: TOXIC DRUG POLICY, TOXIC DRUG SUPPLY



KPL 85 QUEEN ST SOUTH ART GALLERY LOWER LEVEL

EXHIBIT RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 28

This exhibit features over 200 purple markers representing a fraction of the deaths from preventable overdoses in Waterloo region. In 2021, the Waterloo Region Drug Action Team partnered with a local church to create 370 purple markings for International Overdose Awareness Day. More than 820 residents are suspected to have died of overdose since 2018.



These markings were created to give the community a chance to collectively grieve. Each marking has been hand-dedicated (painted, coloured, and written on) by direct service workers, families, friends, and loved ones.

These markings are a poignant reminder of the impact that this crisis has had on our community - and our collective responsibility to bring about change in a community often celebrated for it's 'barn raising' spirit.

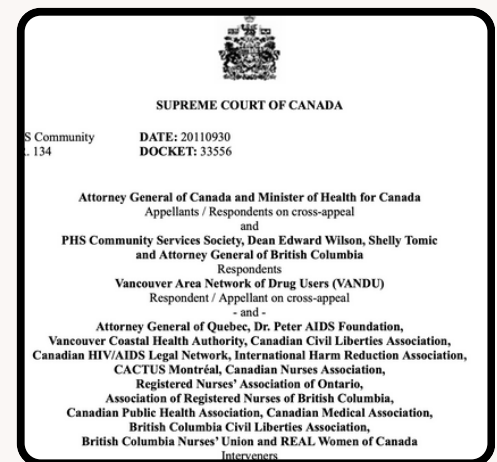


CHECK OUT KPL FOR MORE INFO

# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Thirteen years ago, on September 30, 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) **ruled 12-0** against the Attorney General of Canada and Minister of Health for Canada for their efforts under a progressive conservative government to close Vancouver's consumption service (InSite). The SCC wrote that the Minister's right is not absolute, and must **conform to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, among other findings.

Respect for the SCC precedent is one the WR DAT wishes Ontario's P.C. government would embrace. In Ontario, more than **21,000 residents have died from drug poisoning since the election of the current government in 2018**. Arbitrary caps and restrictions on consumption services was one of the first acts of Ontario's P.C. Ford government. And not the last, obviously.



## SAVE THE DATES

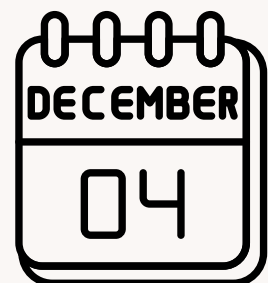


OCTOBER 2, 4-7PM, LOCATION TBA  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TRAINING



DECEMBER 4, EVENING: KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY  
MAIN BRANCH

The WR DAT is in discussions with an Ontario filmmaker to screen his latest film at the KPL. Featuring **outreach workers, shelter staff, and people with living and lived experience** this event highlights issues of systemic hostility faced direct service staff in their work alongside people surviving homelessness, substance use, mental health, poverty, and more.





# ADVOCACY FOR CONSUMPTION SERVICES

Several Ontario organizations wrote to the Ontario government in March and held an online briefing. No provincial response was received. A follow up letter was sent in August, with no response received from the province. Municipalities desperate for consumption services, many with pending **CTS applications submitted years ago, have since been denied approvals.**

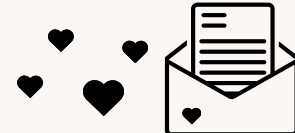
You can view the letters and the short online briefing featuring guests from Timmins, Windsor, Sudbury, the RNAO and others [here](#).

At least 4 CTS/SCS review reports have been commissioned by the Ford government since 2018. **Not one provincial report recommended defunding consumption services.** The Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association, the Drug Strategy Network of Ontario and many, many more have called for expansion and improvements (e.g. ending the provincial ban on inhalation accommodation, the most common consumption method in OD deaths).

**The absence of services, including consumption services, is particularly severe in northern Ontario, contributing to poisoning fatalities that are consistently higher than provincial averages. Our thoughts are with our Indigenous neighbours, and people in places like Sudbury, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, among others.**



# LETTERS OF CONCERN: CTS



**Dear Minister of Health -**

I am an addict who, if not for this site, would be dead. I am someone's brother, son, father, uncle. I know I have overdosed accidentally at the site, not knowing the strength of the drug I purchased. I don't overdose on purpose and when being saved with narcan if it would have happened anywhere else, I would have been vulnerable to injury, theft, even death. Please please reconsider. I wish I never would have started. I was trying to not relive the trauma I dealt with as a child. PLEASE DON'T CLOSE THE SITE.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

I spent the last 20 years of my life chasing drugs. It was completely debilitating. Drugs was always the first priority. There was no testing and as a result I got xylazine poisoning. I developed sores. After being able to test my drugs I have been able to avoid using xylazine and the sores have now gone away completely. Furthermore I have not had an overdose the entire time the space has been open, whether or not I used there. The staff are so caring and attentive that for the first time in years I am actually considering quitting completely. I can finally imagine going to work part time. They not only provide a safe place to use but they also provide employment to people who would not be understood in the normal job market. They have saved my life

**Dear Minister of Health -**

I appreciated the CTS site in Kitchener. Without this safe consumption site a lot of us would be in jail or dead. Without drug testing a lot of my friends would be dead. Without counselling it would be hard to come back to the light from the darkness and pain that got half the community on opiates and uppers to cope with covid, the economy crash and the pain and suffering. Working to take the site away would cause more damage than good. Reconsider the idea. Signing off, a recovering father of four & a taxpayer.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

In our city, Kitchener Waterloo, the safe consumption site opened. In 4 years until it opened, we lost 470 people due to fatal overdoses. The Region of Waterloo approved a safe

consumption site to open in 2019 & in the first 6 months, 900 lives were saved with only one call to 911/EMS. I

physically got my first death shortly (1 month) after the CTS opened. They did chest compressions, bagged me, and through CPR my heart rhythms came back. They have saved my life and brought me back from death and back to life 9 more times. It's a very beautiful thing to know that there's somewhere - a safe place with health care, nurses, support and peer worker - can help you realize that you are special. Because of CTS I've been a peer outreach worker. Please consider keeping CTS open so we don't lose a whole shitload of people.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

My worry is that you will close off these sites and the increase in drug paraphernalia &/or overdoses, drug users passed out, & or using in front of city hall where children can see all of this and could be traumatizing for some young child & or family members. Having the CTS around helps keep users off the street and gives them a warm place in the winter months. Sometimes just gives them a place to use the washroom facilities because most businesses will not let customers use theirs. This is a safe place to use and dispose of paraphernalia away from the general community. I am worried this will become an epidemic all on its own without CTS.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

I am writing to voice my vehement opposition to the proposed closure of Consumption & Treatment Services (CTS) sites across Ontario. This potential move is not only short-sighted but also deeply irresponsible. It is both alarming and unacceptable.

CTS sites are a lifeline for individuals battling mental health and substance use issues. They provide unique essential services in our communities. Closing these sites will result in a catastrophic breakdown in care for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. This is a matter of life and death.

CTS sites are a critical component of the mental health and addiction treatment system. Removing them will leave countless individuals without the specialized support they need, inevitably leading to a spike in crises and emergency interventions. This is a blatant disregard for the well-being of those who are already struggling.

As you know, CTS sites manage overdoses and other health issues that impact drug users in the community. The fallout from closing CTS sites will burden emergency services and hospitals. We have an ageing population - it is not only reckless but utterly irresponsible to shift this immense strain onto already overtaxed healthcare resources.

The populations served by CTS sites are among the most marginalized and vulnerable.

Closing these sites will deepen existing health inequities and inflict additional suffering on those who already face significant barriers to care.

The impact on families and communities will be devastating. The support that CTS sites offer extends well beyond individual patients; it strengthens families and supports community stability. To dismantle these services is to undermine the fabric of our communities.

Your responsibility as Minister of Health is to safeguard the well-being of Ontarians, not to jeopardize it for the sake of politically misguided cost-cutting measures. The potential consequences of closing CTS sites are severe and unacceptable. I demand that you halt any plans to close these critical services and instead invest in strengthening and expanding them.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

As an addict and a homeless woman in Waterloo Region, CTS has been a positive support to myself and others. I have extreme anxiety. I don't have any family supports. So with CTS's wonderful welcoming support, and extended hours. The CTS has mental health peer support workers, they go up and beyond as supports for every person. They help every day of the year. The ladies and men who work here are caring, understanding, supportive, underappreciated, underfunded. The CTS has referrals to other community supports and is an amazing go between stepping stone to help people on the right track. These supports are needed - an outreach, drop-in community clinic, for addiction and mental health, nurse care, peer support, referrals, and the last of the supports is clean usage and consumption. Being a homeless woman, being outside, having a clean, sterile environment to use, prep my drugs, for a safe clean place to be while homeless, is very hard. Please don't close this CTS. Thank you.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

My name is [redacted] and I think the CTS should stay open because you guys have saved so many lives and made a difference. By taking the CTS away you guys don't realize you're taking more people's lives. So why did you even open it in the first place for people like us?? :(

**Dear Minister of Health -**

I really hope you reconsider closing the CTS in Kitchener. I wouldn't be here today if not for the site. If you close the site my 2 kids will become orphans, my niece and nephew will not have an uncle & my mom and dad will lose their son. It's not an if but a when. When does my luck run out. Before this site opened I overdosed over 40 times and luckily I had a girlfriend who narcaned me and saved my life. I don't have her in my life anymore. I haven't overdosed where I needed narcan in a year. Closing the site will for sure be a death sentence.

**Dear Minister of Health -**

You look at me and see a useless junky. I look at you and see an uncaring person with too much power. Maybe we are both right. At least I don't want you dead because of your circumstances. Closing the Kitchener CTS is death for me and a checkmark in a box for you. Does it feel good to win this way?



# TAKE ACTION!!!

**WRITE A LETTER, E-MAIL, OR CALL OUR REPRESENTATIVES!**

**LINKED BELOW IS A DRAFTED LETTER YOU CAN USE!**

Doug Ford's Office:  
Phone: 416-325-1941  
Email: [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

Minister of Health / Deputy Premier:  
Phone: 416-327-4300  
Email: [sylvia.jones@ontario.ca](mailto:sylvia.jones@ontario.ca)

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Find My: [Member of Provincial Parliament](#) and [Member of Parliament](#)

**MPPs:** The decision to defund is provincial, made by MPs of the current P.C. government.

**Ontario-based MPs:** Federal MPs from a riding in Ontario.



[Sign this petition!](#)

<https://rnao.ca/news/sign-and-share-petition-for-funding-of-supervised-consumption-service-sites>



[Draft Letter](#)

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UWPIYGomY4Im\\_ISZgw5I\\_3LJuENFnCrhIHqv4Vf9TZQ/edit?usp](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UWPIYGomY4Im_ISZgw5I_3LJuENFnCrhIHqv4Vf9TZQ/edit?usp)



[Faith Leaders Petition](#)

Faith leaders are calling on their counterparts across all faiths to support consumption services.

[www.faithsupport4scs.ca](http://www.faithsupport4scs.ca)



**Share this Newsletter! JOIN the mailing list [here](#):**



<https://www.drugactionteam.ca/contact>



**WATERLOO  
REGION  
DRUG  
ACTION  
TEAM**



21  
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Not  
FORGOTTEN  
Lost you  
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Makin

REMEMBER OUR  
FALLEN  
FRIENDS



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