

August 27, 2024

Chair Redman and members of Regional Council,

The Waterloo Region Drug Action Team (WR DAT) reminds Councillors and staff that with the annual International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) events now a memory, our neighbours remain in need of a fulsome response as much as any other time since the IOAD events began 7 years ago, and more than a decade since the now-defunded, leading-edge, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council(WRCPC) warned of the impending threat to public health and safety.

Notwithstanding the reluctance of senior levels of government to advance an urgent response, municipalities are not powerless. On Wednesday, local residents are meeting on Frederick Street to call for authentic action on the raging public health emergency lacking any urgent strategy and rapid deployment of resources to initiate the solutions proven to improve both individual and community health and safety.

We remind Council of our communication of March 2023, and that despite the on-going public health emergency that is crushing residents and staff of local service providers, the Region still lacks a successful, coherent drug strategy. It is a curious phenomenon after WRCPC's leadership in previous years. We encourage Council to support a *community-led* plan and action on the solutions certain to provide relief to all taxpayers, public, private, and not-for profit sectors.

We encourage Council to formally, strongly express to the province the community outrage at the defunding of the Sanguen Health Centre's Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) in Kitchener, reflective of the valued partnership that community members have heard so much about since the CTS was established. The provincial announcement will, unequivocally, kill people, among other harms. WRPS calls for service and other data suggest the community at-large will not be better off after the CTS closure.

Finally, we encourage Council to expedite a consumption service(s) via the federal Urgent Public Health Needs Site exemption into community, before any threatened legislation is tabled in the fall. People's lives, access to basic health and social services, including addiction treatment, and the extreme burden on emergency staff and area non-profit staff matter.

The WR DAT has significant drug-related expertise and experience, is volunteer-driven, and receives no government funding. If the WR DAT can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at wrdrugactionteam@gmail.com

Kind regards,

Waterloo Region Drug Action Team