

McMaster Medical Student Lobby Day: Supervised Consumption and Overdose Prevention

Opioids are substances derived either naturally or synthetically from the opium poppy. They are commonly prescribed as a medication for pain control, and produce their analgesic properties by eliciting a powerful feeling of euphoria. Examples of opioids include codeine, fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone, hydromorphone, and heroine.

Opioid use is widespread in Canada; in 2012, 1 in every 6 Canadians used opioids. However, recently there has been a dramatic rise in illicit and prescribed use, leading to a 30% increase in hospitalization, and 45% increase in deaths due to opioid use.

Hamilton is not immune to the repercussions of opioid use. In 2017, Hamilton experienced an opioid related death rate 72% greater than the provincial average.

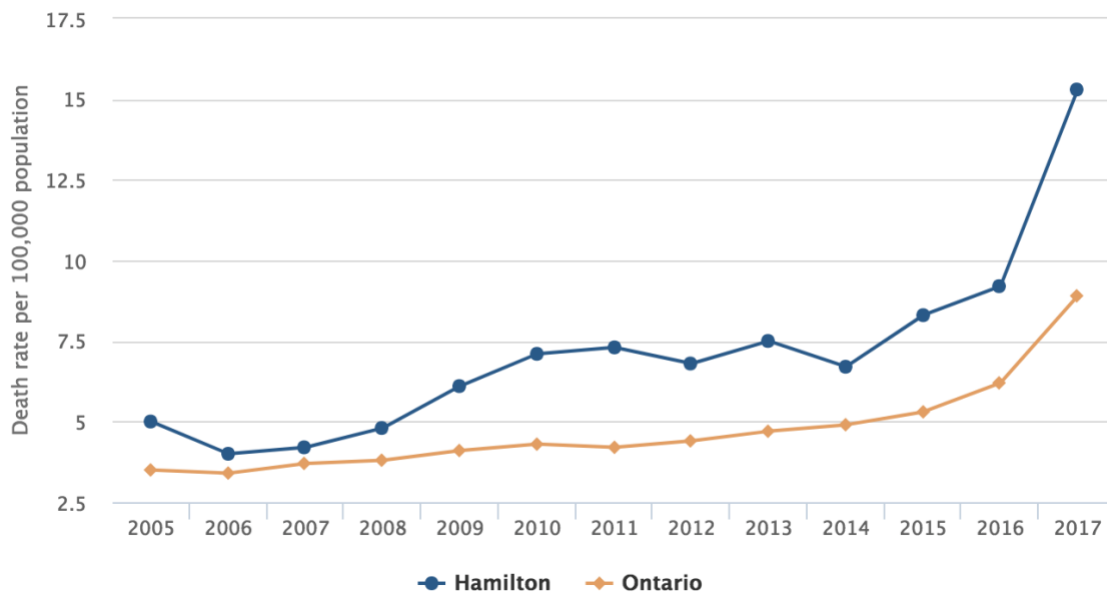


Figure 1. Opioid Related Death Rates in Hamilton and Ontario, 2005-2017

Since Insite, the first supervised injection site, opened in Vancouver in 2003, there has been a wealth of data and evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of supervised consumption in combating opioid-related overdoses. The data show that the establishment of supervised consumption sites results in a decreased morbidity and mortality, is cost-effective in keeping people out of hospitals and emergency rooms, decreases public nuisances and public drug use, as well as increases access to addiction treatment and social programs.

As such, **we ask that the Hamilton City Council publically reaffirm their commitment to the operation of a permanent supervised consumption site in the downtown Hamilton core. We ask that Councilors sign an open letter citing their support of a permanent supervised consumption site to Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott.**