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**Subject:** Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs  
**Date:** August 5, 2020 4:19:09 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)  
[decriminalization letter.pdf](#)

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Good afternoon Minister Hajdu and Attorney General Lametti,

Please see the attached correspondence sent on behalf of Joe Faas, Chair of the Chatham-Kent Board of Health.

Thank you,

**Heather Bakker**  
Administrative Assistant | CK Public Health

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July 30, 2020

The Honourable Patty Hajdu. P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
Sent via email: [Patty.Hajdu@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Patty.Hajdu@parl.gc.ca)

The Honourable David Lametti  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada  
Department of Justice Canada  
284 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8  
Sent via email: [David.Lametti@parl.gc.ca](mailto:David.Lametti@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister Hajdu and Minister Lametti:

**RE: The Decriminalization of Personal Possession of Illicit Drugs**

This builds on the Board's September 2018 endorsement of a similar motion from Toronto Public Health. In making this endorsement, the Board joins a growing movement to pursue a public health approach to drug policy.

Opioid use and its related harms is a growing problem here in Chatham-Kent. From 2003 to 2017 the rate of emergency room visits for opioid poisoning among Chatham-Kent residents increased 225% and the rate of hospitalizations increased by 45%. Since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been an increasing number of calls to local EMS and emergency department visits related to opioid overdoses.

Evidence from other countries that have pursued decriminalization, demonstrate, that in order for it to be effective, this approach must be accompanied by investments in harm reduction, treatment, and mental health supports and services. <sup>1</sup>

The Board strongly supports the decriminalization of personal possession of illicit drugs together with comminuted commitment of resources to effectively address problematic substance use and reduce related harms in our community and calls on the federal government to create a national task force to research drug policy reform.

Sincerely,



Joe Faas  
Chair, Chatham-Kent Board of Health

C: Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police  
Honourable Dave Epp, MP, Chatham-Kent-Leamington  
Honourable Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Leamington  
Honourable Monte McNaughton, MPP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex  
Chatham-Kent Municipal Council

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, C. and Stevens, A. (2011). Harm Reduction Digest (44) A resounding success or a disastrous failure: Re-examining the interpretation of evidence on the Portuguese decriminalization of illicit drugs. Drug And Alcohol