

Community **Mitigation Strategies** and **Ongoing Engagement** for a Consumption and Treatment Services Site at 746 Barton Street East

November 2022
The AIDS Network

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INTRODUCTION

This report is an expansion of our *Community Consultation and Engagement Report for a Consumption and Treatment Services Site in Hamilton's Ward 3 – November 2021*.

Some of the information contained within this expanded report also appears in our more comprehensive community engagement report, however some strategies have been expanded to include additional planning processes, proactive actionable strategies, and existing methods currently being implemented throughout our existing programming.

This report demonstrates our thoughtful commitment to the ongoing engagement of the community and the ways in which we will mitigate community concerns. We have developed these strategies and considerations based on our own consultation processes, as well as through the on-going consultations with other CTS sites including Urban Core – Hamilton, Positive Living Niagara – St. Catharines, the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection – London, as well as general consultation with the Ontario Harm Reduction Network (OHRN).

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1. Community Safety

Safety considerations have been made in the best interest of the general community around the proposed location as well as people accessing services at the space. The proposed model of staffing includes peer engagement roles that will be responsible for engaging with people in and out of the space to help navigate group dynamics among service users and other community members. These roles will also be an integral part in planning for ongoing community engagement, education and awareness activities, and program evaluation to ensure that the voice of people with lived experiences is central to service delivery and implementation.

Practical safety considerations are also reflected in the proposed budget with the installation of security cameras and third-party security staffing. This will ensure that the site is accountable to community and being proactive to mitigate any safety concerns and concerns about increased police presence in the area.

As part of the daily work at the CTS, regular community walk-arounds will be conducted outside of the building and in the surrounding areas. These combined approaches will ensure that any safety concerns that may arise are monitored and addressed in a timely manner with the best interests of our service users and the broader community as paramount.

We understand through our community consultation that fear of safety issues is central within the opposition to a CTS. We will continue to work with the community to understand the stigma that is often at the root of these fears, and through modelling and engagement, we will demonstrate the ability to increase access to safety for all members of our community.

2. Access to Wraparound Services

The vision for this site is to create a centre with life saving overdose response and daily on-site services with organizations and groups that work from a harm reduction framework. To date, we have confirmed commitment from groups and organizations that will provide a variety of weekly on-site supports ranging from peer activities, clinical services including primary care and addiction medicine, Indigenous-based services, mental health supports, and substance use and mental health services for youth. We strongly believe that this model of service is a benefit to the community and will address existing concerns that are present in Ward 3.

3. Ongoing Community Engagement

As part of the community consultation process, The AIDS Network has created mechanisms for community to reach us including a dedicated email address, social media channels, and online surveys.

These will continue and be expanded on as part of an ongoing community engagement plan.

Our initial surveys will be closed at the time of this report, and we will open a second round of surveys that will act as an ongoing engagement tool for people to provide

feedback to inform program implementation and ongoing improvement. These surveys will remain.

Our existing and ongoing community engagement centres around increasing access points for both receiving and sharing the most relevant and timely information available at all times. Our education and community engagement work is directly informed by the community to ensure that community needs are being met and gaps are being addressed in a meaningful way.

We have continued to build upon existing outreach opportunities across Hamilton and Ward 3 specifically, drawing upon our current models of practice, we will have the capacity to increase our education and capacity building work with local businesses, community members, groups, organizations and People Who Use Drugs (PWUD)

Currently The AIDS Network has a Harm Reduction Outreach Worker who provides Harm Reduction education and support across Hamilton, as well as at locations within Ward 3 such as the Hamilton Public Library at 571 Barton Street East and The Sex Workers Action Project (SWAP), now located at 771 Barton St East. The existing relationships and initiatives within these spaces and other outreach locations will support to expand the access points available to collect and disseminate information specific to the proposed CTS for the purposes of reporting and coordination of these engagement strategies

We will build in mechanisms to continue to collect feedback from people accessing services to not only improve their overall experiences, but so that we may understand what they are experiencing in the community and the area surrounding the proposed CTS site which we will work to address. We will do this through the development of a service user advisory committee, as well as client surveys, and questionnaires made available on-site for service users accessing the space. This information will also be shared with community partners to ensure that they understand and may adapt to unique needs of people accessing supports within a CTS and within Ward 3

We believe that using our existing resources to provide key messaging around trends that we are seeing as they impact specific communities is also important to identify target populations who may be disproportionately impacted, such as within our existing ACB, WHAI, Harm Reduction, and GBMSM programming.

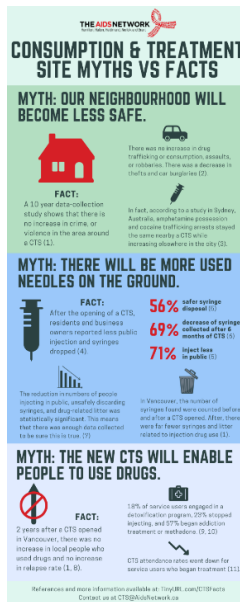
We will host quarterly open houses for the public to provide opportunities for community members, potential service users, businesses, and service providers to better understand Community and Treatment Services and our direct models of service. This will include opportunities for all community partners and peer representatives

involved within the space to provide information about the services that they are offering and insights into the populations that they serve and work alongside and to continue to build trust within the community.

4. Education and Awareness

With our organization’s history in harm reduction programming, it is within our existing funding mandate to provide community capacity building and education related to harm reduction. In collaboration with community partners, there are plans being made to host an online panel discussion with representatives from the medical community, Disability Justice Network Ontario, and people with lived experiences as speakers.

Further to that we will continue to develop educational materials and resource materials by print and for digital sharing.



Understanding that there can be a digital divide, there have been some great suggestions made through engaging with residents in Ward 3 including flyer mail outs and engagement at community events. We have connected with a resident who helps plan activities at Lucy Day Park which is approximately 300 meters from our proposed

location. This resident was very receptive to inviting us to activities at the park to share information and build relationships.

Similar to our aforementioned community engagement strategies, Education and Awareness is a key component to our existing outreach and community development work. Our current Harm Reduction staff frequently provide education and training to service providers, community members, business, colleges, and universities across all of the regions that we serve (Hamilton, Halton, Haldimand, Norfolk, and Brant).

We will have the opportunity to hold regular meetings with both TAN staff and CTS staff to share information about what is happening both inside and outside of the CTS, Ward 3, and across the broader Hamilton Community. This collaborative approach provides a unique opportunity to enhance the knowledge of the community, as well the staff who engage in this work.

Existing TAN Directors, Management, and Staff sit on various coordinating committees, community drug strategies, planning committees, and various tables across the regions which allows us to increase awareness of what is happening within the communities, what issues or challenges may be present, and work with other community organizations, peers, community members, to work collaboratively to identify areas for increased education and awareness. We continue to build these activities into our Ministry work planning and prioritize events that increase awareness and education such as International Overdose Awareness Day, community forums, panel discussions, webinars, presentations, outreach activities, and other community events as they are identified.

When we were conducting our community consultations, one organizations we met with, the Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association of Hamilton (ACCA), expressed concern regarding the lack of specific consideration for the potential impact on ACCA members and the Black community members who may experience increased surveillance and policing in the immediate area of the CTS.

We will continue to work with our existing partners and look to develop new partnerships with organizations such ACCA, to increase education and support for ACB and BIPOC within the Hamilton community. We will work together to address the complex needs of BIPOC people who use drugs, including issues related to racism, colonization, criminalization, surveillance, and trauma. Partners include, but are not limited to, the and Caribbean Council of HIV/AIDS of Ontario (ACCHO), The Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI), Hamilton Community Urban Core's Black Health Team, and De dwe da nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre.

5. Program Evaluation and Report Back

Using surveys and discussion groups, ongoing feedback will be received for program evaluation and program planning. This will align with our current priorities of ensuring effectiveness and quality programming to inform ongoing service delivery.

To create space for a diversity of interests and voices, an advisory committee will be established to meet on a regular basis. This will represent key stakeholders of the CTS including on-site wraparound service providers, local resident and business representatives, people with lived experiences with substance use, and people who may be misrepresented in the provision of harm reduction services.

Report back to community will include monthly data sharing and semi-annual community reports including both qualitative and quantitative information.

As mentioned, we sit on multiple committees and regular community meetings each month. In Hamilton and Brantford, we are actively involved in Drug Strategy committees and chairing working groups, which include members of local government and police services. We attend monthly Community Partnership Meetings with Hamilton Urban Core's CTS site, which is attended by a number of community service providers, church members, neighbours, peers, social navigators, emergency services, and public health service providers. We believe that these existing mechanisms for disseminating information will be invaluable as we undertake this new CTS.

In some of our initial community consultation meetings, we had proposed the opportunity of developing advisory committees, which would include concerned member of the community. The feedback that we received at that time was that the concerned members of the community did not feel that their time should be sent on such efforts. Still, we believe that providing such spaces wherein people may engage in the development and processes of evaluation, reporting, providing timely feedback, and addressing concerns should they arise are extremely important and continues to be a priority within our ongoing engagement plan

We will develop a weekly newsletter, which will be available through our website and existing social media accounts (including website, Facebook, Instagram, twitter) and in print, which will provide regular updates, report on trends identified within the community, provide information on community events, and opportunities for increased engagement.

Our existing relationships with the community and community stakeholders, as well as with those who are eager to support our proposed CTS will allow us to ensure a consistent and ongoing flow of information and reporting directly back into the community, as well as add increased accountability to funders, stakeholders, and all members of the community.