

CITY OF HAMILTON

MOTION

Board of Health: February 13, 2023

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR A. Wilson

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR N. Nann

Advancing a Whole-Community Harm Reduction Framework

WHEREAS, [The geographic analysis of opioid-related deaths across Ontario](#) shows that larger urban centres, including Hamilton, exhibited the largest increase in both rates and in the absolute number of cases of opioid-related deaths during the pandemic;

WHEREAS, [Between 2005 and 2021, Hamilton had a higher rate of opioid-related deaths than the provincial average;](#)

WHEREAS, [Opioid-related deaths continue to rise year-after-year in Hamilton.](#) In 2019, 106 Hamilton deaths are probable or confirmed to be opioid-related. In 2020, those numbers increased to 128 and in 2021, those numbers increased to 170;

WHEREAS, [From June 2021 to May 2022, 29 deaths in the Hamilton homeless population were reported.](#) 16 of those deaths were reported to be overdose-related and 30% died while accessing shelter;

WHEREAS, There is a need for sustained funding to maintain harm reduction services including safer use spaces;

WHEREAS, Adequately funded harm reduction services would create cost-savings to other municipal and frontline services;

WHEREAS, The YWCA Hamilton has been operating a safer use space since late April 2022 to present. As of January 19, 2023, the program has served 176 unique guests and successfully reversed 34 drug poisonings. There have been zero calls made to police and one call made to EMS that did not require transfer to hospital;

WHEREAS, The meaningful engagement and involvement of people with lived and living experience of drug use and homelessness is vital;

WHEREAS, The City of Hamilton has a responsibility to implement policies and programs designed to urgently address the increase in opioid-related mortality, including providing access to evidence-based harm reduction services across the City, including in the houseless serving sector; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That City staff be directed to track and document all deaths related to toxic drugs and report back annually to the Board of Health in the fourth quarter of every calendar year, beginning in 2023; and
- (b) That City staff be directed to:
 - i) Convene with local stakeholders, including people with lived and living experience, health, and drug policy experts, to develop an evidence-based harm reduction action plan for the purpose of addressing high rates of opioid-related deaths with a completion and report back to the Board of Health on June 12, 2023; and
 - ii) That these consultations and action plan specifically consider how to implement safer use spaces and other evidence-based harm reduction strategies both in the City and in the Houseless serving sector.