



Memorandum

TO: Krista Power, City Clerk **FILE:**

FROM: Councillor Kristen Oliver, Chair
Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee

DATE: 01/03/2023

SUBJECT: Social Issues, Support for Vulnerable People

**MEETING &
DATE:** Committee of the Whole - 01/16/2023

Manager of Community Strategies Cynthia Olsen provided a deputation to the Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee requesting advocacy on Addressing the Opioid Poisoning Crisis and Social Issues, Support for Vulnerable People.

Thunder Bay District Health Unit area has been disproportionately impacted by the drug poisoning crisis for many years, and has continued to see an increase in rates of morbidity and mortality. While we have a wide range of harm reduction, treatment, prevention and community safety programs/services available in our community, we continue to experience gaps in service and underfunded programs. The following are some local statistics:

- In 2021 Ontario's rate of opioid related deaths was 19.2/100,000, and it was **78.8/100,000 for Thunder Bay District Health Unit**
- Since starting to record Superior North EMS suspected opioid-related calls in the City of Thunder Bay (does not include District data), there has been a sevenfold increase in call volumes from 96 calls in 2017 to **729 calls in 2021**
- The composition and types of substances present at time of death has changed over the years:
 - In 2008, morphine was present in 62.5% of deaths (10/16)
 - In 2013, methadone was present in 61.5% of deaths (16/26) and was the type of substance present at death most frequently until 2018
 - In 2018, fentanyl became the most predominant substance at time of death, and in 2021 **fentanyl was present in 90% of deaths** (108/120)
- Opioid related deaths have increased from 16 in 2008, to 26 in 2013, to 120 in 2021; this does not include non-opioid related drug toxicity deaths

- Emergency Department visits and hospitalizations have also increased over the years as follows:
 - Hospitalizations: 2008 (26.8/100,000 or 42 cases); 2013 (34.7/100,000 or 54 cases); 2021 (41.4/100,000 or 64 cases)
 - Emergency Department Visits: 2008 (30.6/100,000 or 48 cases); 2013 (42.5/100,000 or 66 cases); 2021 (251.4/100,000 or 389 cases)

The City of Thunder Bay, through the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy is an active member of the Drug Strategy Network of Ontario (DSNO), which represents 41 drug strategies across the province. The DSNO members work together to prevent and reduce harms related to substance use from a 4-Pillar Model which incorporates prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and community safety perspectives.

The DSNO developed four recommended policy solutions to reduce drug poisoning deaths and injuries in Ontario. Implementing these policies will significantly reduce the harms, including death, experienced by people who consume unregulated drugs. They will also improve community safety by reducing drug-related crime and drug poisoning rates, while simultaneously reducing escalating demand on first responders, police and courts responding to the current drug poisoning crisis.

In an effort to assist with advocacy on this issue, the following motion is presented for Council's consideration.

WITH RESPECT to the Memorandum from Councillor Kristen Oliver, Chair – Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee, dated January 3, 2023, we recommend that Council endorse the policy recommendations prepared by Drug Strategy Network of Ontario: “Solutions to End the Drug Poisoning Crisis in Ontario: Choosing a New Direction”;

AND THAT the City of Thunder Bay request the Province declare the drug poisoning crisis an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA, RSO 1990) and create a Provincial Task Force to address the crisis as outlined by the Drug Strategy Network of Ontario;

AND THAT the City of Thunder Bay call on the Province to provide adequate funding to expand evidence-informed harm reduction and treatment practices throughout Ontario;

AND THAT the City of Thunder Bay call on the Province to eliminate the structural stigma that discriminates against people who use drugs;

AND THAT the City of Thunder Bay call on the Province to increase its investments in prevention and early intervention services that provide foundational support for the health, safety, and well-being of individuals, families and neighbourhoods;

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be provided to NOMA, AMO, FCM, the Minister of Health – Ontario and the Premier of Ontario;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to Council for ratification.