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Drug Strategy Network of Ontario: Supervised Consumption Services

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Supervised consumption services - or Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) as they are known in Ontario exclusively - are a proven, essential, life-saving initiative. Expanding their establishment as a cost-effective component of a more fulsome strategy has been communicated to the province by the DSNO, municipalities, health professionals, first responders, direct service workers, and many others in the public, private, and non-profit sectors for many years. Defunding, obstructing, and/or delaying their establishment will not provide the relief that Ontario residents seek.

Among other drug-related initiatives that improve both individual and community health and safety, the DSNO supports:

1. Provincial expansion of CTS, and financial support for new and existing consumption services proceeding via the federal Urgent Public Health Needs Sites.
2. Elimination of the arbitrary provincial cap, and the expensive, bureaucratic approval process that hampers new CTS applications, and forces municipalities to wait years for the province to respond to pending applications.
3. Steps to improve SCS/CTS were last communicated by an Ontario coalition in March 2024 and again in July 2024 however the Province is unwilling to respond or engage. The province has not shared the 'review' reports completed months ago, and rumoured to be positive about the benefits of CTS sites.

Ontario's absence of a robust emergency plan, and supporting resources, grounded in science, and the wisdom of the substantial expertise available in the province, remains a barrier to providing the relief that DSNO members and others across the province desperately seek.

Data from the Chief Coroner of Ontario reflects a chronic absence of success - currently one drug poisoning death every 2.5hrs, on top of more than 21,000 Ontario deceased residents since the current government was elected in 2018. The number of deaths would almost certainly be much higher - and the financial and workload burden for emergency responders and hospitals for example - if not for the efforts of staff and volunteers to establish and maintain consumption sites. The success of the Province's legislated Community Safety and Wellbeing Plans are certain to be compromised, hampering community efforts to reduce overdose and provide pathways into addiction treatment.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, the DSNO, and others over many years, have pleaded for an emergency plan comprised of evidence-informed solutions - including supervised consumption services, voluntary addiction treatment on demand, safe supply, sustained prevention funding, legislative reforms etc. - and continuously expressed a willingness to work collaboratively with provincial authorities. This outreach of experience and expertise have not yielded a response or willing provincial partnership to date.

For more information, contact: OntarioDrugStrategies @ gmail.com

The Drug Strategy Network of Ontario (DSNO) is a multi-sectoral network of municipal and First Nations drug strategies grounded in prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement-justice systems. Members advance evidence-informed initiatives that prevent and/or reduce harms to individuals and local communities. Unique in North America, the DSNO stretches across the urban, rural, and remote regions of Ontario. The DSNO receives no government funding.