



October 17, 2025

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, Chair, Ontario's Big City Mayors,

On behalf of the Drug Strategy Network of Ontario (DSNO), we write to express our grave concerns about a motion before the Ontario Big City Mayors regarding involuntary apprehension, and further, the use of the notwithstanding clause to override the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to evict people who are homeless and surviving in camps in municipalities across Ontario.

Not privy to the motion, it is difficult to ascertain which constituents are the target of the motion suffice to say it is highly unlikely to provide the health and safety relief we all seek in our communities.

The mechanism for apprehension, and the potential for involuntary care, exists, in Ontario. The primary issue remains the chronic lack of action to improve the capacity that could provide evidence-based treatment and support - including aftercare - within this "system", including those residents confined to Ontario's correctional facilities. More generally, involuntary addiction treatment is unsubstantiated by the evidence. Voluntary, evidence-based treatment on demand remains chronically elusive for most people in Ontario.

Similarly, evicting people who are homeless still leaves them homeless, fuels significant harms, including deaths, and is unnecessarily expensive. Again, the issue remains the absence of a provincial strategy that would meaningfully guide and urgently deploy resources toward identified solutions enabling population-level, systemic capacity addressing issues of housing, substance use and addiction, and mental health.

The DSNO warned of the impending threat to both individual and public health and safety more than a decade ago. The DSNO has provided support to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and many others, at all 3 levels of government, over many years. Missed prevention opportunities of years past are today's unsustainable crisis response. We certainly empathize, more than many, with the humanitarian disaster - and budgetary pressures - unfolding in municipalities across Ontario.

Solutions exist, but involuntary apprehension and overriding the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* by invoking Section 33 are far from the most urgent priorities identified by Ontario entities possessing the experience and expertise on these issues.

We urge the OBCM to reject the politicization of a humanitarian tragedy, and embrace the solutions proven to improve both individual and community health and safety. If the DSNO can be of any assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Parkinson", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Parkinson,
Director, Drug Strategy Network of Ontario

Cc:

Michelle Baker, Executive Director, Ontario Big City Mayors
Mayor Robin Jones, Village of Westport, President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario

About the DSNO

Established in 2008, the Drug Strategy of Ontario (DSNO) is an extensive, multi-sectoral network of municipal and First Nations drug strategies grounded in a 4-pillar approach with efforts in prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and community safety systems.

Members of the Network have experience and expertise in evidence-informed initiatives preventing and/or reducing the harms that can arise from consuming regulated and/or unregulated substances.

Unique in North America, the DSNO stretches across the urban, rural, and remote regions of Ontario.

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