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June 13, 2022

To Whom it may concern.

The Peel Drug Users Network is writing in support of the findings of the Supervised Consumption Services Needs and Feasibility Study which was led by Peel Public Health in collaboration with MOYO Health and Community Services and the Canadian Mental Health Association. The study indicates a need for Supervised Consumption & Treatment Services in the Region of Peel. The Peel Drug Users Network came into existence in November 2017 in response to the rapid increase in overdose amongst people who use drugs in our region. The purpose of our network was to connect people who use drugs to each other and their allies; the goal being to reduce the isolation that people who use drugs experience as a result of stigma and criminalization and to create a space where our community could keep each other safe by staying connected and engaged in matters pertaining to our lives.

Since our creation, the Peel Drug User Network's growth has been unstoppable and 16 months into our community inception, we had grown to well over five hundred members. People who use drugs from the Peel Region have shown us desperately how isolated they felt, and 5 years later, Peel Drug Users Network, not only has members connecting to each other, but they are also connecting to services, supports and employment opportunities, all while leading the response to the poisonings happening across our region, in our social networks. Peel Drug Users Network members sit in various roles and capacities to ensure that nothing about our lives is without our input. We continue to be one of the largest drug-user-led networks in Ontario and contribute our experiences wherever discussions about drug policy, health equity, and drug poisoning occur.

We are the victims of hate crimes, our value the topic of constant debate, the survivors of the war on drugs we are the discarded remains of humanity because it is believed that as people who use drugs, we chose our fate and deserve death because we use our drugs. Yet alcohol is readily available with safe consumption sites ie: bars & restaurants decorating every major street in our region. Those safe consumption are enjoyed daily by our citizens, highly sought after spaces taking reservations and hosting glowing reviews of 4 and 5 stars for their esthetics and menu, newspaper boasting the hip new place sure to draw in crowds of substance users from neighbouring cities, and here we are, seven years into a crisis that has killed more than what would be acceptable with any other population of people, begging you to take notice and implement a proven response to this public health crisis. To begin to try to describe all the people who have been lost would be near impossible, but they were our friends, our work colleagues, your business owners, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. They were people we loved, and they continue to be people we miss. They were stolen from us before they even had a chance. Some were addicts, some were recreational users, and some were

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just beginning their very normal journey of experimentation and all of them are dead. Drug use happens and no amount of policing will make these deaths stop. This is not something tough love and determination will sort out.

The evidence for Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services is sound. They are proven effective and have been in operation for over a decade in some places in Canada with not one reporting a fatality. Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services need to be part of any responsible community's response to the harms of a poisoned drug supply. Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services provide services, meeting people where they are at by providing them with a space to use drugs but where their drug use is not the primary focus, living to see another day is. They provide people who use drugs an entry pathway into service, by providing care in a non-stigmatized environment where their peers are the staff recreating the cultural community practices of caring for one another, something we are accustomed to and can trust. Within the walls of the site, people are met with love and compassion and the process of healing severed relationships between service providers and service users can begin.

Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services are a key part of any community that aims to keep its citizens well and its cities thriving. The presence of these sites is long overdue in our Region. Had we had the original Peel Overdose Prevention site open its doors when originally planned many of our loved ones may still be alive. Their blood is on our hands. The Peel Drug Users Networks implores you to wait no longer. Too many lives have already carelessly been lost. People who use drugs do not want to die. We care about our lives. We beg you to as well. Our drug use is something we do, not something we are. We have been cast from society for far too long, our needs ignored – being left to die in your streets. Whether indoors or outdoors, privileged or criminalized we are at imminent risk of death, the threat that tomorrow is not guaranteed very real. Some of us won't survive to walk through the doors, so we ask that you stand with us in saying our lives matter. We have the right to life and these services will save lives. Communities across this country, many like our own have taken the responsible steps of implementing Supervised Consumption & Treatment sites, we must join them. We urge you to act now, listen to the recommendations of the study, and support the opening of a Supervised Consumption & Treatment Services in the Region of Peel.

Sincerely,

P.P. 

Peel Drug Users Network Steering Committee
Pdunetwork@gmail.com