

## **More Front-Line Workers for Every Community in Ontario to Combat Opioid Crisis**

*Province Also Expanding Availability of Life-Saving Naloxone Kits in Communities*

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Ontario is stepping up its fight against the national opioid crisis with new front-line addiction and mental health workers for every community in the province and the distribution of almost 80,000 additional naloxone kits per year to front-line organizations.

Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, was joined by John Tory, Mayor of Toronto at The Works Needle Exchange Program in Toronto today to announce new measures to tackle Ontario's opioid crisis.

The province is providing funding for every board of health in Ontario to hire more front-line workers, such as addiction outreach workers and nurses, to help municipalities expand supports for people impacted by opioid addiction and overdose. This will allow communities to improve addiction outreach, education and planning while working on early warning and surveillance of opioid overdoses.

More than 6,500 additional naloxone kits per month will be distributed in the community to those at risk of opioid overdose and their friends and family, through community organizations such as shelters, outreach organizations, AIDS Service Organizations, Community Health Centres and withdrawal management programs. This will broaden the reach of existing harm reduction programs that are currently offered by Public Health Units and community partners.

Later today, Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Marie-France Lalonde, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, John Fraser, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Sophie Kiwala, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services will be meeting with mayors from across the province to discuss the unique experiences of individual communities dealing with opioid addiction and overdose and to continue working together to address this important issue.

Ontario is increasing access to care, reducing wait times and improving the patient experience through its [Patients First Action Plan for Health Care](#) and [OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare](#) - protecting health care today and into the future.

## QUOTES

" The devastating impact of opioid use disorder and overdose has reached every community across the province, and crosses all demographics. Our government is committed to working together with our partners across the province to combat this issue through a collaborative, evidence-based, comprehensive approach that will help save lives."

- Dr. Eric Hoskins

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

" Opioid addiction and abuse is a serious, complex issue that requires immediate attention. By increasing front-line workers, and expanding access to naloxone kits by thousands, we are adding on the significant work already being done to combat opioid overdoses and fatalities occurring across the province."

- Dr. David Williams

Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health

" Reducing overdoses is a vital public health issue for Toronto. With today's announcement by the Government of Ontario, it is clear that the Province understands that cities are on the front line when it comes to the growing danger of opioids. More front-line workers and naloxone kits will prevent opioid overdoses. My focus is always on the health and safety of the people of our city."

- John Tory

Mayor of Toronto

## QUICK FACTS

- Ontario is expanding the distribution of naloxone to the places where people who use drugs are living or currently accessing services. Local public health units will serve as naloxone distribution hubs for eligible community organizations.
- Ontario's first comprehensive [Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose](#) includes initiatives to enhance data collection, modernize prescribing and dispensing practices and connect patients with high quality addiction treatment services.
- Recently announced initiatives include: a new [Interactive Opioid Tool](#) that provides a wide range of data on opioid-related morbidity and mortality across the province; stricter controls on the prescribing and dispensing of opioids, including fentanyl patches and expanding access to opioid substitution therapy; and funding for three supervised injection services sites in Toronto, and committing to provide funding for an additional site in Ottawa.
- As of March 2017, more than 28,000 naloxone kits have been dispensed free of charge at pharmacies, public health units and community-based organizations that run needle exchange and hepatitis C programs, as well as provincial correctional facilities.

## LEARN MORE

- [Where to Get Naloxone Kits and How to Use Them](#)
- [Ontario's Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose](#)

- [Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care](#)

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