



**PARKDALE
QUEEN WEST**
Community
Health Centre

MEDIA STATEMENT

On International Overdose Awareness Day, Toronto health and community organizations call for action to restore supervised consumption services

TORONTO, ON – August 31, 2026 – On International Overdose Awareness Day, Toronto health and community organizations remember the people we have lost to the toxic drug supply and stand with people who use drugs, their families, and communities affected by the overdose crisis.

This is a moment for governments at every level to act with urgency, compassion and evidence.

New findings from *Beyond the Closure*, a needs assessment of former and current supervised consumption service users in Toronto funded by the City of Toronto, show significant gaps in access to care following Safe Consumption Site closures. In the first-month survey:

- 79% identified drug checking as difficult to access;
- 68% identified overdose prevention, response and aftercare as difficult to access;
- 58% identified wound care as difficult to access; and
- 47% identified basic-needs supports as difficult to access.

In the survey, 17 of 19 respondents — nearly 90% — reported using drugs alone. Respondents identified home and public spaces including alleyways, parking lots, stairwells, streets, bridges, encampments, TTC locations, and washrooms as places where they used drugs.

For some participants, losing access to supervised consumption services also meant more contact with emergency health services: 42% reported increased EMS visits and 32% reported increased emergency-department visits.

According to Toronto's Drug Checking Service, 90 per cent of fentanyl samples checked in July contained the veterinary tranquilizer medetomidine. More than half contained a combination of at least one high-potency opioid, a veterinary tranquilizer, and a benzodiazepine-related drug.

This is the reality people are navigating: an increasingly unpredictable and complex drug supply, where substances may contain multiple potent drugs and unexpected contaminants. When access to supervised consumption and other harm-reduction services is reduced, people have fewer opportunities to check their drugs, prevent and respond to overdoses, and access the health care and support they need.

Safer consumption services and safer supply initiatives are foundational parts of a comprehensive response to the overdose crisis. Supervised consumption services provide opportunities to prevent and respond to overdoses while connecting people with wound care, ID services, new supplies, basic needs, healthcare referrals, and infectious-disease testing.

The needs assessment found that people valued supervised consumption services not simply as places to consume drugs, but as trusted health and community spaces. Participants identified non-judgmental care, safety, confidentiality, and privacy among the most important qualities of the services they accessed.

Our advocacy is directed at policy and decisions, not individuals. But we must be clear when policy decisions remove life-saving services.

We are calling on governments to:

- Restore stable and sustainable funding for supervised consumption services;
- Maintain and strengthen evidence-informed harm-reduction services, including safer consumption and safer supply initiatives;
- Listen to and work collaboratively with people with lived and living experience, frontline workers, health professionals, families and communities; and
- Invest in a continuum of care that keeps people alive and connected to support.

This is about ownership and accountability. People should not have to die because the services that could help keep them alive are unavailable, inaccessible, or unsupported.

On International Overdose Awareness Day, we remember those we have lost, support those who are here, and advocate for the services people need to survive.

This statement is endorsed by Fred Victor, Sherbourne Health, Street Health, and Toronto's Drug Checking Service.

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