MEDIA RELEASE

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Hamilton Drug Strategy identifies 2020 goals and releases annual Report to the Community

HAMILTON, ON – Today, the Hamilton Drug Strategy (HDS) held its annual partner event, drawing approximately 125 attendees, to celebrate its accomplishments, hear from people with lived experience and share information about its activities for 2020. The HDS also recently released its inaugural annual Report to the Community.

In Hamilton, like many communities across the country, substance use continues to be a growing concern. People from all walks of life are impacted by their own or someone else’s substance use – and the costs for people, families, and communities is significant. Turning the curve on complex community health issues requires long-term comprehensive strategies and actions.

The event recognized some outstanding partners and individuals in the community who have contributed over the year to the goals of the drug strategy. For his dedication to and passion for the cause, Ron Keenan received the HDS Volunteer of the Year award presented by Mayor Eisenberger. Ron volunteers on the Steering Committee overseeing the HDS in addition to the prevention, treatment, harm reduction and social justice/justice workgroups and has provided valuable input into activities.

During the event, the HDS identified its goals for 2020 which aim to advance its overall goal to ensure all residents of Hamilton are free of harm due to substance use and are able to enjoy the best quality of life. This will be pursued across four key areas of work including prevention, harm reduction, social justice/justice, and treatment.

The 2019 annual Report to the Community highlights key past accomplishments and aims to raise public awareness about how the HDS and community partners are taking action to address substance use-related issues in Hamilton. The annual Report to the Community will be released every year in February.

The HDS is a city-wide collaboration that involves over 125 key stakeholders and members of the community to identify and address system-level gaps, and to implement evidence-based practices to ensure all individuals can live their best quality of life.
Quick Facts

- In addition to the opioid crisis, local data reveals there are four other substances of concern, including alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, and stimulants such as methamphetamines, for example, crystal meth.
- In 2018, there were 124 deaths related to opioids in Hamilton.
- There are 3,000 emergency department visits for alcohol-related harms each year in Hamilton.
- Three out of four people who inject drugs reported facing stigma for their use of drugs.

Additional Resources

Hamilton Drug Strategy 2019 Report to the Community

Quotes

“Today’s Hamilton Drug Strategy (HDS) partner event serves as an important reminder that while we have made progress toward addressing substance use-related issues in Hamilton, there is much more work to do. We thank the many partners and individuals involved in this work and congratulate HDS Volunteer of the Year award recipient Ron Keenan for his outstanding contributions. We look forward to continuing to work together with our partners to ensure that all Hamilton residents are free of harm due to substance use and are able to enjoy the best quality of life.”
Dr. Elizabeth Richardson, Chair, Hamilton Drug Strategy Steering Committee, and Medical Officer of Health, City of Hamilton

“As an organization that has been offering community-based programs and services for many years, we are appreciative of this opportunity to participate in the Hamilton Drug Strategy. We have more demands upon our prevention and harm reduction programs now, so it is helpful to have more partnerships to share information and better coordinate services to the community.”
Tim McClemont, Chair of the Harm Reduction Workgroup of the Hamilton Drug Strategy, and Executive Director of The AIDS Network

“My experiences and the experiences of others with substance use and want to help others in the community who struggle with addiction and mental health related issues. Acceptance is the key to freedom.”
Ron Keenan, person with lived experience and recipient of the Hamilton Drug Strategy Volunteer of the Year award
“The stigma people with substance use disorders face from family, public, workplaces and service providers prevent them from talking about it or getting help. We need to remember that this is a health issue and be more compassionate toward people who have an addiction. The ‘See the Person’ Campaign elicited positive feedback from our city and it also gave us motivation to keep the conversation going. Some of the negative comments were those that I have said to myself and hear from tenants I work with; the heartbreaking thing is that we were saying them about ourselves. When society is reinforcing the shame we carry it becomes paralyzing. This campaign is changing important perceptions that give hope to people who may not be able to find it for themselves.”
Lisa Colbert, person with lived experience and peer support worker with Indwell

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