



**Meeting of The Toronto Board of Health June 14th, 2021
Item HL 29.2 Toronto Overdose Action Plan: Status Report 2021**

Submission: Angie Hamilton, Executive Director, Families for Addiction Recovery

Families for Addiction Recovery (FAR) was founded by parents whose children have struggled with substance use disorder from their early teens. FAR exists because the needs of our families are not being met. We expect our children to receive treatment, not punishment, for being ill. That rarely happened in 2016 when we started, and it still rarely happens today.

For the fourth time, FAR supports Dr. De Villa's recommendations, particularly the need to decriminalize the possession of drugs for personal use and a safer supply.

There are only two new points to be made.

The first is that FAR would like to respectfully request that someone on the Board move to amend Recommendation 3(a) to the Federal Minister of Health to add the words "everywhere in Canada, as opposed to on a city-by-city basis" so that it reads as follows:

"a. use the authority under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to permit the simple possession of all drugs for personal use **everywhere in Canada, as opposed to on a city-by-city basis**, and further, to support the immediate scale up of prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services; and"

According to the 2016 Census, there were over 5,000 municipalities in Canada. Are we really going to do this on a city-by-city or municipality-by-municipality basis? Our criminal laws fall under federal jurisdiction. When someone is convicted of committing a crime they are labelled as "criminals" which can have serious and harmful lifelong effects. The same activity should be criminal or not-criminal across Canada. How can the federal government justify criminalizing someone for possession if they are standing here, but not if they are standing there? Decriminalization should be national in scope. Anything less is illogical, inequitable and unethical.

Secondly, the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM) recently issued a [Policy Brief](#) in favour of the decriminalization of drug use and possession for personal use, a copy of which is attached to this submission. I am a co-author. To summarize:

- the evidence is that criminalization is ineffective;
- the evidence supports decriminalization of drug use and possession for personal use.

The evidence does not change based on where someone is standing in Canada.

Thank -you.

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