

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health
Toronto Public Health
277 Victoria Street
5th Floor
Toronto, ON, M5B 1W2

Dear Dr. de Villa:

Letter of Support – Alternative Approach to Drug Criminalization in Toronto

Thank-you for inviting Families for Addiction Recovery (FAR) to be a member of the Working Group on an alternative approach to drug criminalization in Toronto. FAR endorses your recommendations for an alternative approach to the criminalization of drugs and, in particular, that:

1. The Board of Health reiterate its call requesting the Federal Minister of Health to use their authority under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to:
 - a. Develop a national framework to permit the simple possession of all drugs for personal use; and
 - b. Support the immediate scale-up of prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services.
2. The Board of Health direct the Medical Officer of Health to submit a request to Health Canada by the end of 2021 for an exemption under Section 56(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, thereby starting a process to decriminalize the personal possession of illicit substances within the City of Toronto's boundaries.

We will reserve comment on details of the particular model being developed until it has been finalized and made public.

One final comment. It is difficult to understand why the Working Group has been tasked with developing pathways to treatment and services. Many people use illegal drugs non-problematically and many who use legal substances do so problematically. In fact, alcohol is the substance with the greatest cost to the criminal justice system. It would make more sense to examine alternative pathways to treatment and services in the context of all substances.



Angie Hamilton
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