



Ontario's Big City Mayors call for action on ambitious mental health and addictions plan

June 18, 2021 – Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) are joining mental health leaders and Chiefs of Police in calling for the decriminalization of controlled substances and the continued creation and funding of Mental Health Crisis Response Units. These units combine trained mental health professionals and police officers to respond to identified low-risk crisis calls and wellness checks.

OBCM is not alone in advocating in these changes. Mental health and substance use experts have been advocating for reforms for years. Opioid poisonings, hospitalizations, and deaths have been on a dangerous incline. The Ontario Drug Policy Research Network reported 2,426 opioid-related deaths in 2020, a 60 per cent increased over 2019, making 2020 the worst year on record since tracking began.

It has never been clearer that action is needed now. While the provincial government is responsible for funding and coordinating mental health and addictions supports, all levels of government have a role to play in improving services for our residents.

"Now is the time to be bold," said Jeff Lehman, Chair of OBCM and Mayor of Barrie. "Our call for policy change is consistent with OBCM's growing mandate to advocate for the resources our residents and communities need. The province's *Roadmap to Wellness* plan is a good plan and we want to work together to implement it vigorously. We look forward to working closely with the province to bring this plan into reality."

"Mental Health Crisis Response Teams are tried and tested in municipalities across the province. Many OBCM members have first-hand experience with programs like COAST and IMPACT, and have seen significant outcome improvements for residents," said Marianne Meed Ward, Mayor of Burlington and Co-Chair of the Mental Health Working Committee. "We are calling for a consistent program to be mandated province wide with the necessary funding to support and ensure their success."

"The federal government has taken evidence-based action before and we are asking them to do it again by decriminalizing controlled substances to enhance public safety and save lives," said Darrin Canniff, Mayor of Chatham-Kent and Co-Chair of the Mental Health Working Committee. "The OBCM caucus is eager to collaborate with the federal



government on how we better improve people's lives who are struggling with substance use and reduce societal trauma associated with deaths."

Recommendations put forward by OBCM can be found here in its Mental Health and Addictions Policy Paper.

About Ontario's Big City Mayors

Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM), formerly known as the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, includes mayors of 29 single and lower-tier cities with a population of 100,000 or more, who collectively represent nearly 70 per cent of Ontario's population. OBCM advocates for issues and policies important to Ontario's largest cities.

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MOTIONS FROM JUNE 18, 2021 - OBCM

CITY OF LONDON, ONTARIO, TERROR ATTACK

MOVED by Mayor Crombie (Mississauga)

Seconded by Mayor Lehman (Barrie)

Ontario's Big City Mayors wish to strongly condemn the act of terrorism that occurred on June 6, 2021, and express our sincere condolences to the Afzaal family. We stand united with Mayor Holder of London and his community. We are only too aware that hate and islamophobia are present in Ontario, and collectively we condemn all forms of racism and islamophobia and encourage participation in anti-Islamophobia events and activities.

CARRIED

KAMLOOPS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL UNMARKED BURIAL SITE DISCOVERY

MOVED by Mayor Bigger (Greater Sudbury)

Seconded by Mayor Guthrie (Guelph)

Whereas in May 2021, the remains of 215 children were found in unmarked burial sites at the Kamloops Indian Residential School;

Whereas we join with the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation and Indigenous communities and individuals across the country in mourning these 215 lives;

Whereas our communities recognize the importance of and support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

Therefore, OBCM expresses condolences and offer our support to the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation, and we commit to continuing to support our local indigenous communities and organizations through addressing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We support the funding of searches of all former residential school sites and the proposed Day of Mourning.

CARRIED

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS POSITION PAPER

MOVED by Mayor Canniff (Chatham-Kent)
Seconded by Mayor Meed Ward (Burlington)

Whereas the intersecting crises of mental health and addictions have worsened during COVID, including rising numbers of overdose and suicide deaths;

Whereas the OBCM Mental Health Working Group has prepared a policy paper with recommendations to upper levels of government, including bold steps designed to address both the current crises and its root causes;

Therefore, OBCM receives and endorses the policy direction as stated within the submitted paper and looks forward to working with the upper levels of government to implement these recommendations.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING FLEXIBILITY

MOVED by Mayor Collier (Ajax)
Seconded by Mayor Lehman (Barrie)

WHEREAS *Ontario Regulation 588/17: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure* requires municipalities to have sustainable funding mechanisms for key assets in place by 2024;

AND WHEREAS the most equitable funding option available to municipalities is user fees, which according to common interpretation of the *Municipal Act, 2006*, must be levied on a utility bill;

AND WHEREAS many lower-tier municipalities are inhibited in their ability to levy appropriate user fees because utilities do not fall within their jurisdiction, or due to a lack of appetite or cooperation from local utility partners;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

1. Ontario's Big City Mayors request that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) discuss constructive, long-term solutions to this roadblock with the Province of Ontario on behalf of all municipalities; and
2. That OBCM support AMO and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)'s calls to the Province of Ontario and Government of Canada about predictable, sustainable funding opportunities to address municipal infrastructure needs.

CARRIED