



Substance Use & Addiction

Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy | May 2022

Many people use substances without concerns or issues and experience them as helpful and enjoyable. However, for some people, the costs (health, relational, financial and legal costs) of using a substance become greater than the benefits of using it. When tolerance and physical/psychological dependence to a substance develops over time, brain functionality changes. We can experience cravings, compulsive use, and the loss of control over when, what, how and where we use. This is called **Substance Use Dependency (SUD) and Addiction**. These are non-volitional health issues which require support and treatment.



22%

of Canadians will meet the criteria for a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) during their lifetime (Statistics Canada). To compare, the prevalence of diabetic retinopathy is approximately 25% in Canada.

(Diabetes in Canada Background, Diabetes Canada, 2020)



Although opioid prescribing rates have fallen (in Guelph-Wellington they dropped 11% between 2017 and 2019*) **the rate of opioid-poisoning deaths has increased exponentially during the pandemic, increasing by 79%** amongst 25-44 year-olds in Ontario**.

*(Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, 2020) ** (The Ontario Drug Policy Research Network, 2021)



In the city of Guelph **52 known drug poisoning deaths occurred in 27 months**, from January 2020 - March 2022. This is a rate of almost 2 people dying each month from drug poisoning.

Policy changes that will address the drug poisoning crisis and other addiction issues:



Solutions

- ✔ Address the systemic stigma surrounding substance use so that SUDs and addiction are treated like all other chronic health issues, such as heart disease or diabetes.
- ✔ Fund SUD and addiction harm reduction and treatment needs proportionally to meet service needs throughout the province.
- ✔ Decriminalize the possession of substances for personal use to eliminate this barrier to getting help.
- ✔ Legalize and regulate all drugs in order to eliminate the toxic and unregulated black market for substances. The toxic drug supply is currently the source of almost all drug poisoning deaths in Ontario.

Learn More

Read about the actions that our community is taking to advocate against stigma and for better drug policies: www.wgdrugstrategy.ca

Learn about the costs and impacts of the drug poisoning crisis both locally and provincially at the Ontario Drug Policy and Research Network: <https://odprn.ca/>

Get local data about substance use trends and population health at Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health: <https://wdgpublichealth.ca/>

Take Action

Ask a candidate:

What action does your party plan to take to address and end the drug poisoning crisis?

Ask yourself:

What is my attitude towards people who experience addiction? What do I need to learn about the impacts of substances and substance use to make me someone who can make informed choices about community safety in regards to substance use?

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination partnered with the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy to create this fact sheet:



www.wgdrugstrategy.ca

@WGDrugStrategy

519-821-6638, X 350



www.gwpoverty.ca

@gwpoverty

info@gwpoverty.ca