

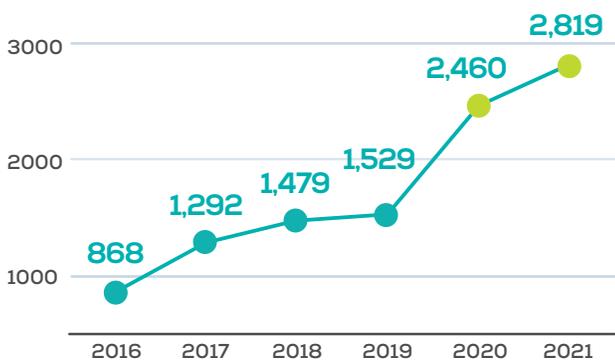


Opioid Crisis

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario is urging parties to focus on an integrated provincial response that will fund and implement a substance use and opioid strategy to support local communities as they address the opioid crisis as well as other emerging substance use issues.

Ontarians need a strategy that is developed using a public health-based approach that addresses the social determinants of health, and that also takes a non-discriminatory approach to overdose prevention, harm reduction and treatment. A fully funded, comprehensive strategy is required now as Ontario is experiencing an opioid overdose crisis and increased rates of consumption of other substances as a result of the pandemic.

Number of opioid-related deaths from 2016-2021



COVID-19 pandemic measures have had a significant negative impact on people who use drugs

A crisis that disproportionately impacts marginalized and racialized populations

At any other time outside of a pandemic, the current situation would be considered a major public health crisis



Drug Poisoning Crisis

While the current situation is often described as an "opioid overdose crisis," it can also be described as a "drug poisoning crisis." This is because the unregulated drug supply is contaminated with many toxic substances that are contributing to the tragic number of overdoses, hospitalizations and deaths in Ontario.



Since the start of the pandemic, between 21 - 27 % of Ontarians are consuming more substances like tobacco, cannabis and alcohol

Action required

Develop a comprehensive, integrated, cross-sectoral and coordinated provincial drug strategy that addresses the opioid overdose crisis

- Create an Overdose Response Accountability Task Force comprising mental health and addiction agencies, people with lived experience of drug use, public health, community-based social service providers, treatment experts, leaders from the Indigenous and Black communities



- Increase access to Rapid Access Addiction Medicine clinics

- Increase supportive housing for people who use drugs

- Fund "safer supply" programs which are currently operating as pilot projects with federal funding



- Remove the restriction on the number of Consumption and Treatment Services that can operate in Ontario.

- Expand residential treatment services that provide a range of treatment options for people with opioid use disorder

- Provide grief and trauma supports for frontline workers responding to the drug poisoning crisis

