

Today's News - Wednesday, May 24, 2017

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The following statement was issued today by Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Provincial Overdose Coordinator, and Dr. Dirk Huyer, Chief Coroner for Ontario:

"The opioid crisis in Ontario is a growing and evolving problem, and one we are continuing to work diligently to combat. Gathering accurate data on the impact of opioids is a key part of our Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose. As part of our commitment to openness and transparency, Ontario is now launching the [Interactive Opioid Tracker](#), which is a web-based tool that makes available a wide range of data on opioid-related morbidity and mortality. As the data shows, the opioid problem is affecting people of all ages, right across Ontario.

The data shows that 412 people died as a result of opioid overdose in the first six months of 2016, compared with 371 during the same time period in 2015, representing an 11 per cent increase. For the same six-month time period from 2014 to 2015, there was a 13 per cent increase in opioid-related deaths. These statistics further exemplify why taking action on this issue is crucially important. The information in the Interactive Opioid Tracker provides over 10 years (2003-2016) of the highest-quality verified information on opioid-related emergency department visits, hospitalizations and deaths in Ontario. It will help health care workers and policy makers across the province better understand the scope and scale of the opioid problem and support the development of targeted policies and interventions that will strengthen our response on a provincial and local level.

Ontario's opioid strategy is the most comprehensive in the country. We are already providing life-saving naloxone free of charge in over 200 towns and cities; de-listing high-strength, long-acting opioids; providing support for substance use disorder treatment and supervised injection services; increasing investment in mental health supports; providing funding for 18 pain management clinics across Ontario; and supporting the development of new quality standards for appropriate prescribing.

We have been clear about the urgent need to address the opioid problem. The Interactive Opioid Tracker will help us to better understand how opioid overdose and death is affecting people in Ontario and will strengthen our strategy as we work to combat this crisis in a targeted and informed way."

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Also today:

- Ontario is making it easier for commuters and families in Peel Region with upgrades and improvements to Cooksville GO Station. The province has reached the next milestone in the project with the closing of the request for proposals to design, build, and finance the station upgrades. The planned improvements to Cooksville GO Station include:
 - A new station building

- A new six-story parking structure and redevelopment of parking areas
- Upgrades to the platform and access tunnels
- A bus loop with a minimum of eight bus bays for GO and MiWay bus service

Improvements to the Cooksville GO Station are part of Ontario's plan to deliver GO Regional Express Rail (RER), which will provide faster and more frequent service with electrification on core segments. Improving public transit for commuters and families is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday.

Our government's plan to build a stronger, healthier Ontario includes historic new **investments in health care, including free medications for everyone 24 and under** through OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare, **providing free tuition** to over 210,000 students and on-the-job learning opportunities to help land a great job, helping 100,000 kids access quality, licensed child care, **making everyday life more affordable by reducing electricity costs** by 25 per cent on average through our proposed Fair Hydro Plan, and **taking action to make housing more affordable** for homebuyers and renters through our Fair Housing Plan.