

Today's News - Thursday, December 7, 2017

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Ontario is taking action to protect important water resources in the Greater Golden Horseshoe by launching a public consultation on expanding the province's [Greenbelt](#). The province is considering expanding the Greenbelt to include areas in the outer ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, an area that is experiencing significant growth and is under pressure from urban development. The public, municipalities, conservation authorities, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities and organizations are invited to provide input on a study area for potential Greenbelt expansion. The consultation comprises seven areas most in need of protection, including moraines, cold water streams and wetlands located on the outer ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This area also includes valuable water resources that communities rely on for their water supply. Comments may be submitted online, through the [Environmental Registry](#) or in [person](#).

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Also Today:

- Ontario is providing life-saving naloxone to police and fire services across the province and seeking an expanded ability from the federal government to address overdoses, as new data shows that opioid-related deaths continue to increase. Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and Marie-France Lalonde, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, were joined by Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Provincial Overdose Coordinator, and Dr. Dirk Huyer, Chief Coroner for Ontario, to make the announcement. New data shows the urgent need for continued action. There were 336 opioid-related deaths in Ontario from May to July 2017, compared with 201 during the same time period in 2016, representing a 68 per cent increase. From July to September 2017, there were 2,449 emergency department visits related to opioid overdoses, compared with 1,896 in the three months prior, representing a 29 per cent increase. Naloxone can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose, and will be offered to all 61 police services across the province, including municipal and First Nation police services as well as the Ontario Provincial Police. The kits will also be made available to all 447 municipal full-time, composite, and volunteer fire departments, all northern fire departments, as well as all First Nations fire services to prevent overdoses, and could also be used to help front-line police and firefighters in case of exposure. Naloxone kits are currently available for free at participating pharmacies and from eligible community and health organizations. In addition, the federal government has recently announced changes that would expand the ability of provinces to respond to the escalating opioid crisis. Under the new federal policy, provinces experiencing a public health emergency can request an exemption under federal law for temporary overdose prevention sites. In response to this federal change in policy, Minister Hoskins wrote a letter to the Federal Health Minister today recognizing the public health emergency in Ontario due to the opioid crisis, and formally requested that the federal government allow Ontario to approve and fund overdose prevention sites. These overdose prevention sites would provide necessary health services that are accessible and free of stigma to help reduce the growing number of overdose deaths affecting some of the most vulnerable and marginalized

populations in Ontario. Establishing overdose prevention sites with a federal exemption would also protect front-line workers at these sites from criminal prosecution.

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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 and making it more affordable for families, making everyday life more affordable by reducing electricity costs by 25 per cent on average through our Fair Hydro Plan, and taking action to make housing more affordable for homebuyers and renters through our Fair Housing Plan.