



January 23, 2020

Julia Douglas, Clerk
Room B-304, Whitney Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A2

Via Email: comm-financeaffairs@ola.org

Re: 2020 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission prepared for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Dear Julia Douglas,

Literally every community in Ontario has been impacted by the opioid crisis. While the Government of Ontario has been and continues to be a national leader when it comes to making the opioid antidote naloxone available in both nasal spray and injectable formulations, more can and should be done to help municipalities develop localized solutions to fight the crisis.

Helping municipalities develop and implement plans to become a Naloxone Ready Community will empower Ontarians to help family members, neighbors and fellow citizens during an opioid overdose.

Specifically, we are encouraging the Province to create a new "Naloxone Ready Communities Grant" which would make the equivalent of **\$1 dollar per resident** available to municipalities willing to develop and implement new local plans.

In order to ensure maximum local flexibility, we would advise a streamlined approval process with funds flowing to municipalities on receipt of a high-level plan, and a commitment to report back on how the funds were used for new initiatives.

The total maximum budget exposure would equal \$15 million.

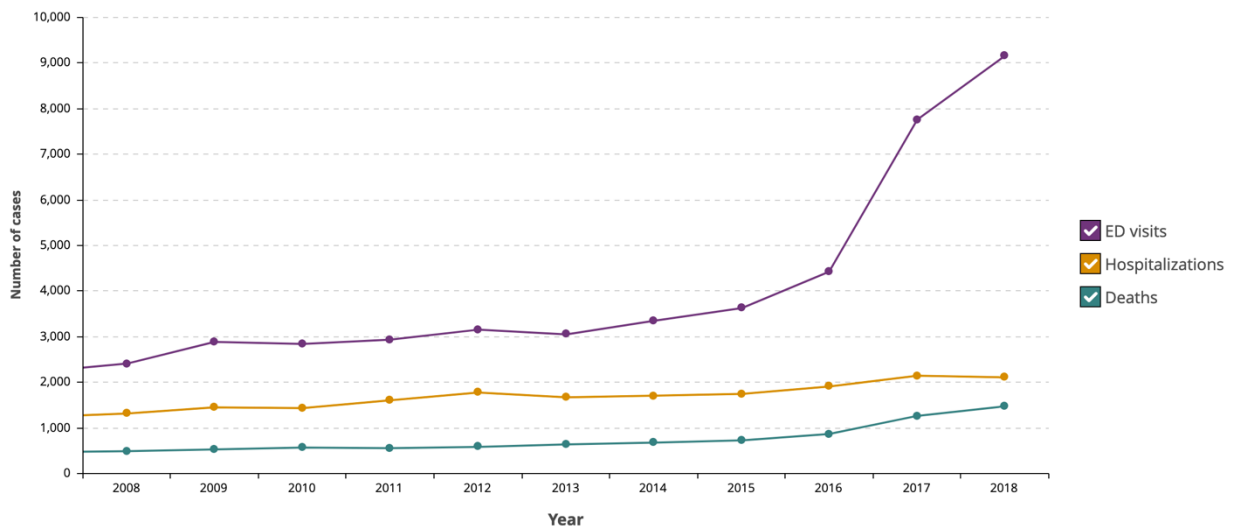
Opioid Crisis

Nationally, Health Canada reported that it is expected that some 4,300 Canadians will die from opioid overdoses in 2019 with 94% of those overdoses being unintentional.ⁱ To put this number in context, in 1995, the worst year of the HIV/AIDS crisis, that disease claimed the lives of approximately 1,400 Canadians. The SARS outbreak, which saw an overwhelming public health response in 2003, resulted in 44 deaths domestically. And in 2009/2010, the H1N1 virus killed 428 Canadians.

Further, the early statistics for the past year show the crisis continues to grow in Ontario. In December 2019, Public Health Ontario reported that 435 Ontarians died from opioid overdoses between January and March up from 307 deaths during the same period in 2018 – a 40 per cent increase.ⁱⁱ In 2018 there were 2.5 times more Ontarians who died as a result of an opioid overdose (1474) than automobile accident (578).ⁱⁱⁱ

The statistics from Public Health Ontario speak for themselves.^{iv}

Cases of opioid-related morbidity and mortality, Ontario, 2003 – 2018



Background on Naloxone

Naloxone counteracts the life-threatening effects of an opioid overdose which can occur anywhere, including private residences and public spaces, necessitating all of us to be ready to help reverse an overdose. NARCAN[®] is the first and only Health Canada approved nasal form of naloxone for the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose. Narcan was developed as an easy-to-use, community-friendly naloxone so that anyone, with or without specialized medical training, can respond if they witness an opioid overdose.

The Ontario government is leading the country in making naloxone available across the province. The success of both the Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP) and the Ontario Naloxone Program for Pharmacies (ONPP) speaks to this. Narcan was designed to be easy to use without medical training and, thanks to the Government of Ontario, it is available to every Ontarian from a pharmacist, without a prescription or charge.

Naloxone Ready Communities

The Naloxone Ready Community initiative is designed to increase access to naloxone, to raise awareness and education on how to use naloxone, and most importantly to empower the community with the tools they need to save a life in an opioid overdose situation.

In a Naloxone Ready Community, if someone were to have an opioid overdose, bystanders would know how to identify the overdose, where to find a naloxone kit, and how to administer naloxone – in the library across the street, in a passing bus, or in the backpack of someone walking by.

Local Challenges - Funding Local Naloxone Initiatives

On August 19, 2019 a naloxone training session was held for municipal leaders from across Ontario at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference in Ottawa.

In addition to receiving naloxone training from a local pharmacist, municipal leaders shared and discussed best practices on awareness and training tactics that municipalities can adopt to become a Naloxone Ready Community. Subsequently, the AMO has communicated that one of its top priorities for 2019-2020 is addressing the opioid crisis at the municipal level across the province.

Although a number of larger municipalities have taken individual actions to address the opioid crisis, the limited resources and lack of sharing best practices were seen as significant barrier in helping municipalities address the opioid crisis. Given the sustained rate of overdose and death due to opioids, it is clear more needs to be done. The government has an opportunity to further build on Ontario's national leadership in addressing the opioid crisis by investing in communities and local solutions.

What Does a Naloxone Ready Community Look Like?

Every municipality will be different depending upon how the crisis is manifested in their community. However, there are several common actions that municipalities can take:

1. Taking a leadership position by passing motions encouraging community involvement
2. Raising awareness of the availability of naloxone through provincially funded programs (ONP & ONPP)
3. Establish a drug strategy committee & policies on how to address overdose
4. Ensure front line staff are trained & have naloxone, e.g. transit workers, parks & rec staff, lifeguards, custodial staff, facilities staff, etc.
5. Ensure naloxone is available in all public buildings
6. Require large municipal licensed events to have naloxone available
7. Ensure municipal transit operators are trained & carry naloxone with them
8. Ensure secondary & post-secondary institutions have an overdose policy & key staff/students are trained & have access to naloxone
9. Host opioid overdose education and naloxone training events in partnership with pharmacy and public health.

By investing in the expansion of the Naloxone Ready Communities program, the Government of Ontario would be taking a leading role in empowering local communities to proactively address the opioid crisis.

This initiative would also allow Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to play an important role with their respective communities to build on Ontario's leadership. By supporting this program, the Government of Ontario would also help increase awareness & education about opioid overdoses and how best to respond, while redirecting resources where they can truly make a difference.

About Emergent BioSolutions

At Emergent BioSolutions our mission is to protect and enhance life. We are a global life sciences company focused on providing specialty products for civilian and military populations that address accidental, deliberate and naturally occurring public health threats. Emergent was founded in 1998 with approximately 1,600 employees across our 19 global locations. Our products range from BioThrax (Anthrax Vaccine) and ACAM2000 (Smallpox Vaccine) to NARCAN (naloxone nasal spray).

Conclusion

We look forward to Budget 2020 and continuing to work with the Government of Ontario. Thank you again for your consideration.

Should you have any questions, please contact us at naloxoneready.com@ebsi.com.

Sincerely,



David Renwick
Vice President & General Manager, Canada
Emergent BioSolutions

ⁱ Special Advisory Committee on the Epidemic of Opioid Overdoses. National report: Opioid-related Harms in Canada Web-based Report. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada; December 2019. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/substance-related-harms/opioids>

ⁱⁱ Interactive Opioid Tool. Public Health Ontario; December 13, 2019. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Preliminary 2018 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report Selected Statistics. Ministry of Transportation; 2018. <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/publications/pdfs/preliminary-2018-orsar-selected-statistics.pdf>.

^{iv} Interactive Opioid Tool. Public Health Ontario; December 13, 2019. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>