

International Overdose Awareness Day
August 31, 2021

Statement Released by Ontario Network of People Who Use Drugs (ONPUD):

In recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day, we would like to reflect and remember everyone who has lost their lives because of many factors including a toxic and illicit supply of drugs supported by failed drug policies. Today, communities across Ontario grieve over the tragedies of lives lost due to the overdose crisis, which during Covid-19 has been mostly ignored because of the stigma and criminalization that people who use drugs and their loved one's experience. People will continue to lose their friends, family and loved ones if the health disparities and harmful drug policies remain unaddressed and unchanged. We will continue to see the number of fatalities rise. People who use drugs have been on the front lines of this war for far too long and ask that during this upcoming election the Federal government responds meaningfully to our cries for support and properly addresses long-term policy changes including decriminalization and legalization of all substances and utilizing meaningful engagement with people who use drugs.

People who use drugs and their allies have been resilient, but we cannot continue to see our friends die. The time for talk is over, we need immediate action to ensure that change and we need it now. This is a public health crisis and health pandemic and should be recognized as such and addressed with evidence-based initiatives. Please join us in a moment of silence today to remember all the lives lost. We will continue to fight against black and Indigenous racism, homophobia, transphobia, and the ideology that people who use drugs don't have the right to life. We know and love people who use drugs and we are remembering over 22,000 Canadians who died from overdose since 2016.

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