

Four Pillars Across Canada - Quarterly Update

Vol. 1 No. 2

October, 2008

In this edition of the *Four Pillars Across Canada - Quarterly Update*, we hear from many Ontario-based drug strategy programs including London, Toronto, Waterloo, Guelph/Wellington County, and Windsor-Essex County.

Last summer, I happened to be in Toronto and spent some time meeting with people active in the drug policy arena. It was fascinating to note the differences, and the similarities, between the way drug issues present themselves in Toronto and Vancouver and how each city has responded. It reminded me that every city's drug-related issues must be addressed in a way that suits the local situation. (I posted several Toronto-based podcasts - including one with Toronto Drug Strategy Manager Susan Shepherd - on our [website](#).)

The visit reinforced my belief that it's tremendously valuable for us to share experiences, initiatives and activities through this newsletter, and other venues, to let others know what has worked (or not) in drug policy in various communities across Canada. Please feel free to share this newsletter broadly with others. The next edition will be published in January and we welcome submissions and suggestions.

--Jennifer Gray-Grant, Communications
City of Vancouver, Drug Policy Program
jennifer.gray-grant@vancouver.ca

London

Steve Giustizia: sgiustizia@london.ca
www.london.ca/cares

The London Community Addiction Response Strategy (London CARES), passed earlier this year, is now into the implementation stage. London CARES is an integrated strategy to address the needs of individuals living with the effects of poverty, homelessness, addiction and mental illness in the communities in which they live. It is an action plan that will build a continuum of care and support its goals of improving health outcomes for those living with addiction, reducing the incidence of homelessness in London and enhancing the quality of life and business prosperity in downtown/priority areas. The strategy is addressing ongoing business and operational issues through regular update meetings. In the coming weeks, it will start holding steering meetings and community meetings.

It has made progress on a number of initiatives:

- Needle bins: London CARES plans to station 10 needle bins in three areas of the city, to support needle collection. Three bins are ready to for installation.
- Outreach: "*Feet on the Street*" includes seven staff who have been hired by community agencies under the London CARES umbrella. Currently, most are in training and coordinated interagency schedules are being finalized. The Mobile Outreach Van is now in operation.
- Telephone System: London CARES has signed a memorandum of understanding with the London and District Distress Centre to pilot a single London CARES call number, starting this month.
- Safe Havens: Two Safe Havens are now open and two more will open in a couple of weeks; business is brisk. Safe Havens are high-tolerance day community centres where substance use is not permitted but people are not asked if they are carrying. London CARES is working to get a treatment outreach worker, nursing students and housing specialists to visit the space.
- Communication Plan: Work continues on a broader communication plan to align with the phone system going live and the needle bin installations. The first media story about London CARES was positive. The website www.london.ca/cares is live and brochures about the strategy are now in circulation.
- Training/Relationships: London CARES is actively working with the local police and other agencies on London CARES training. It is also building relations with by-law enforcement to address issues in parks and private residences with ordinance concerns. It is also starting walkabouts, with outreach staff, to build internal relations and experience and support related field work.

Toronto

Susan Shepherd: sshephe1@toronto.ca
www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy

The Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat co-hosted a screening and discussion of the film *Bevel Up: Drugs, Users and Outreach Nursing*, in partnership with the BC Centre for Disease Control, The Works/Toronto Public Health, the Toronto Harm Reduction Task Force, Street Health and a Community Medicine Resident, University of Toronto. Produced by the acclaimed Outreach Street Nurse Program of the BC Centre for Disease Control, *Bevel Up* offers informed and concrete strategies for providing health care to people who use drugs.

The purpose of the Toronto event was to create awareness about this new educational resource and discuss strategies for using *Bevel Up* across the diversity of sectors that work with people who use drugs (e.g., health and social services, outreach services, mental health and addiction services, police

and ambulance). The session was well attended and garnered considerable interest. The organizing group is developing further strategies to promote *Bevel Up* with colleges and universities in Toronto for use in relevant program curriculum. For more information about *Bevel Up*, go to www.nfb.ca.

Meanwhile, the Toronto Drug Strategy's Crisis Model Working Group completed another phase of its work to develop a delivery model for a 24-hour crisis service in Toronto for people who experience alcohol or other drug-related crises. The latest report documents the findings of surveys with 140 people identified as potential users of the service to hear their perspectives. Key crisis service components identified by the survey participants include: non-judgmental and supportive staff, a 24-hour, safe place to stabilize, physical and mental health care supports, a crisis telephone line and help accessing other services and supports in the community. The Crisis Model Working Group is currently conducting surveys with a broad range of service providers (e.g., health, social, and emergency services) to elicit their input.

Finally, the Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat co-hosted bar policy workshops in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Toronto Police Service, and Toronto Public Health. The sessions, led by Larry Grand (CAMH), covered topics such as alcohol liability issues and laws that impact licensed establishments. Participants also learned how to develop and implement their own bar policies to help ensure safe environments for staff, customers, and the community. Workshop participants rated the sessions very highly.

Waterloo Region

Michael Parkinson: michael.parkinson@region.waterloo.on.ca

Waterloo Region is comprised of three cities and four rural townships, one hour west of Toronto, and has a population of almost 500,000 people. It is an area with a rich Mennonite heritage and a diversified, growing economy. It is also home to an early pioneer in Canadian crime prevention, from which a regional integrated drug strategy will be developed.

The Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council is ramping up efforts to develop a four-pillar drugs strategy in 2008-09, after almost two years of engaging a wide diversity of service providers and citizens in a variety of exercises about issues of substance use. The primary vehicle for engagement, capacity building, debunking myths and stereotypes, inspiring innovation and collaboration, is a unique film and forum series called "In The Mind's Eye", which typically features more than 45 free events over an eight-week period at locations throughout the Region. There have been more than 5,000 participants in two years, and several inspiring initiatives that have grown from the series. See more at www.inthemindseye.ca.

Recent work in 2008 includes a drug strategy forum, the completion of a "baseline users study", a first look at overdose incidents locally (using secondary hospital, EMS and Coroner data), a scan of overdose prevention-intervention programs in North America and a planning session to develop a mobile "omnibus" (mobile primary health care, outreach etc.) and continued facilitation of the region-wide harm reduction network. Most of these reports can be found at: www.preventingcrime.net.

In November, we will host a one-day forum for Ontario leads/coordinators involved drug strategies. People from across the province hope to develop an Ontario network of drug strategy specialists.

The Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council has a long history of supporting multi-sectoral, bottom-up initiatives and this is the approach to drug-related issues. We will continue to support evidence-based policy and practice and look forward to the development a local strategy, a network across Ontario and perhaps one day, across Canada.

Guelph/Wellington County

Stephen Pierce: spierce@gchc.on.ca

Early in 2006, the staff at Wellington County Social Services, Ontario Works, voiced a concern about the increasing impact of substance abuse on the people they serve within the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph. In May 2006, to address the concern, the County of Wellington Social Services hosted an Open Forum to begin a larger discussion and to consider a collaborative response to the expressed concerns. This meeting was attended by approximately 50 people, with representation from various agencies and services. A broad range of concerns were expressed, gaps in services identified, and potential solutions suggested.

Given the feedback from this initial meeting, additional meetings were scheduled and a formal committee structure was established. This structure included membership, terms of reference, vision statements, committee objectives, action steps and working groups.

In June 2007, a presentation was made to the Social Services Committee of the County of Wellington and City of Guelph. At that meeting, the development of a substance abuse strategy received strong support from the Social Services Committee. The substance abuse strategy would address the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. At the meeting, a request was made for funding to support a Coordinator position to guide and develop the strategy. The request was unanimously supported and the funding granted.

During the development of the Substance Abuse Strategy Committee, community leaders approached the committee to offer assistance. A presentation was made at a meeting organized by the Mayor of Guelph that included community leaders from the school system, police and county, municipal and provincial representatives. As a result of this meeting, a Leadership Advisory Group was formed to endorse and offer support to the development of a substance abuse strategy. A Coordinator was hired in September 2007, on a one-year contract. On September 26, 2007, the Substance Abuse Strategy Committee was formally launched, marking the beginning of the development of a comprehensive, coordinated, community-wide substance abuse strategy.

Since September 2007, an Environmental Scan/Needs Assessment has been completed and the process has begun to develop recommendations/strategies to form the overall strategy for the city and the county.

Windsor-Essex County

Adrian McKenzie: amckenzie@weareunited.com

Earlier this year, a [Drug Strategy Framework](#) was approved by Windsor City Council and Essex County Council. Now, Windsor-Essex County is in the process of hiring a Drug-Strategy Implementation-Co-ordinator; the position will be funded through a grant by Greenshield Foundation. The hiring committee consists of representatives from City of Windsor Social Services, Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, United Way / Centraide Windsor - Essex County, the president of a service providers' group, and a human resource specialist. Meanwhile, I am serving as liaison on the Drug Strategy and welcome your questions.

Vancouver

Donald MacPherson: donald.macpherson@vancouver.ca
www.vancouver.ca/fourpillars

This month, the Drug Policy Program (DPP) is wrapping up the second phase of its supported employment project. The project, which is organized by the City's Drug Policy Program and funded by the Vancouver Agreement, gives people who are in recovery from substance use the opportunity to work for approximately six months with the City of Vancouver in the Engineering Department's Street, Waterworks and Sewers Operations. Along with the three men in Streets, four men started work with Waterworks and Sewers.

In November, the Drug Policy Program will make a presentation on the project to the City's Corporate Management Team with the goal of gaining corporate

commitment to expanding the program. In December, an external evaluator will present her report on the latest phase of the project. Drug Policy Program Planner Zarina Mulla, who coordinates the project, explained that the Drug Policy Program's initiation of the project stemmed from the inclusion of a recommendation in the DPP's 2005 report, [Preventing Harm from Psychoactive Substance Use](#) that called for the creation of a supported employment project. At this point, the DPP has funding to carry on the project for one more year and has applied elsewhere for funding for two more years. The September 2008 edition of the [Four Pillars News](#) includes a story on the project.

Another recommendation from the DPP's 2005 report, [Preventing Harm from Psychoactive Substance Use](#) called for the strengthening of prevention efforts in Vancouver. The terms "prevention" is broadened beyond simply the deterrence of drug use to focus on and develop community and individual assets. This fall, the Drug Policy Program has initiated a broad-based collaborative process to create a prevention network in Vancouver. The network will provide a platform to profile current prevention work in the community, facilitate discussion on current critical issues in prevention and offer a forum for dissemination of recent research and findings. Current partners include the Centre for Addictions Research BC, the City of Vancouver's Social Policy department and Drug Policy Program, the School Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Program (SACY), the University of British Columbia, the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver Police Department, the Vancouver Board of Education and Watari Research Association.

Participants in the process hope to create networks of individuals and organizations interested in prevention in Vancouver and to strengthen communications between those involved in prevention, drug user groups, the research community, project funders, schools and provincial policy makers. They aim to build public awareness and support for prevention and create a culture of prevention in the city.

On October 3, there was a Mayor's Four Pillars Coalition meeting in downtown Vancouver. Simon Fraser University Professor Emeritus Bruce Alexander delivered the keynote address. Alexander, who just published the book *The Globalisation of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of Spirit*, started by saying that when historians write about this era in Vancouver, a strong legacy will be the four-pillars approach. He noted, however, that while it's the best that can be done at a city level, it will not solve problems related to drugs. Alexander said that the problem is that the strategies used are not getting at the heart of the issue. He said his new book outlines a re-conceptualization of the problem, to guide people in shifting away from the conventional wisdom that has not lead to a solution to the problem.

The meeting ([click here to read notes](#)) also included presentations on:

- The constitutional issues surrounding last May's legal decision that Vancouver's Supervised Injection Site, Insite, should remain open for another year, while the federal government rewrites a key section of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, presented by Margot Young, Associate Professor, UBC Faculty of Law. (Please note that the [full decision](#) of the legal case is available on the front of the Drug Policy Program's website, under Latest News.)
- Vancouver's Community Court, which opened on September 10, by court coordinator Allan Shoom.
- The new Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions, by Vancouver Coastal Health's Heather Hay.
- The current work on 14 sites in Vancouver, being fast-tracked for development of supported housing, by Armin Amrolia, Senior Development Manager, BC Housing and Rob Whitlock, Senior Housing Planner, City of Vancouver.
- The Mental Health Commission of Canada's five demonstration projects, including the one in Vancouver, examining what kind of housing provides the best support to those who are homeless and facing mental health challenges, by Catharine Hume, Project Coordinator, Mental Health Commission of Canada.
- An update on the Collaboration for Change, which has brought together a broad range of Vancouver's institutional and community stakeholders who are committed to addressing the urgent situation facing some of Vancouver's most vulnerable citizens: those with mental health and addictions problems who are also homeless or living in substandard conditions, by Geoff Plant, Civil City Commissioner.

Last month, the Drug Policy Program published another edition of its newsletter, the [Four Pillars News](#). It includes stories on the Collaboration for Change process, the installation of street-based needle boxes in Vancouver and Victoria, a summary of the growth of the methadone program in Vancouver, the Safer Crack Use, Outreach, Research and Education (SCORE) project that distributed crack kits in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and a description of the Drug Policy Program's new [podcasting](#) site.

The City of Vancouver's Drug Policy Program is also participating in a review of the Methadone program in BC. The Centre for Addictions Research of BC has been contracted by the provincial government to carry out the review.