

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Ontario's fentanyl crisis demands action

Tragically, we are hearing of more incidences of overdoses and deaths from fentanyl, a drug up to 100 times more toxic than morphine, in Ontario.

In fact, as recently as May 8, Shelburne Police arrested an individual for possession of fentanyl. The fentanyl crisis has its origins in the attempt in 2012 to reduce the ability of individuals to abuse OxyContin by crushing, injecting or snorting opioid OxyContin pills. Sadly many of the people addicted to OxyContin switched to heroin, which is increasingly being laced with fentanyl.

The addition of fentanyl to Canada's opioid epidemic by organized crime has resulted in hundreds of Canadians overdosing and dying. In fact, the number of fentanyl overdoses has skyrocketed, increasing 548 per cent between 2006 and 2015. Fentanyl is incredibly potent. A lethal dose of pure fentanyl is as little as two milligrams, or the weight of seven poppy seeds.

The Progressive Conservative Caucus at Queen's Park and my leader Patrick Brown have been asking the government to take immediate action to address this crisis. Brown and others PC MPPs have been calling on the government in Question Period for months. The measures we are advocating include cracking down on illegal pill press machines used to make counterfeit pills and those who operate them.

The second measure we want the government to take is to stop spending taxpayer dollars funding their hydro vanity ads and invest that money in an opioid awareness campaign. Government spending taxpayer dollars on ads that are purely for the benefit of the Liberal Party is wrong, but in the context of hundreds of Ontarians overdosing on a deadly drug, this government action is indefensible. That money should be used to raise awareness, particularly among our young people about the serious dangers of fentanyl.

The PC Caucus is also calling on the government to release weekly overdose reporting data to the public and create a ministerial taskforce to take urgent action to help address the opioid crisis.

If you or a loved one are dealing with a drug or alcohol problem, I encourage you to contact the drug and alcohol helpline at www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca or call the toll free number at 1-800-565-8603

