Hon. Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Queen’s Park  
Toronto, ON, M7A 1A1

Hon. Christine Elliott  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
80 Grosvenor Street, 10th Floor, Hepburn Block  
Toronto, ON, M7A 1E9

September 5, 2018

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Elliott:

We are healthcare providers in Ontario who are extremely concerned about the potentially fatal impact of your government's recent hold on approvals for new overdose prevention sites (OPS)(1) and delayed opening of already approved OPS in Toronto, St. Catharines, and Thunder Bay (2). Evidence unequivocally demonstrates that supervised consumption services (SCS) save lives and keep communities safe. Delaying the opening of these sites will contribute to unnecessary illness and death.

Seven opioid overdose deaths and several other non-fatal opioid overdoses were reported by Toronto Police Services in the two weeks leading up to the government-directed delay in opening an OPS at the Parkdale Site of the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (3). These seven deaths were in Toronto's 14 Division alone, the site of the OPS slated to open. These lives lost are among thousands of opioid overdoses in Ontario in the past few years, which increased by 55% between 2016 and 2017 (4).

Data from North America’s first sanctioned SCS in Vancouver, Insite, shows that the rate of fatal overdoses in Vancouver’s downtown eastside decreased by 35% after Insite opened (5) and there have been 6,440 overdose interventions without any deaths (6). One site in Toronto, The Works, has had 15,362 visits and managed 213 overdoses between August 2017 and July 2018 (7), with no fatalities.

The consistent benefits of SCS are clearly shown in a 2014 systematic review of seventy-five articles (8). SCS were found to promote safer injection conditions, enhance access to primary care, and reduce overdose frequency. Other benefits of SCS include decreased rate of HIV and hepatitis C transmission and reduced drug use in public spaces (9).

There is no evidence that SCS and OPS contribute to increased violence or disorder where they exist; in fact, there is evidence they enhance neighbourhood safety (9). More specifically, in the 2014 systematic review, SCS were not found to increase drug use, trafficking, or local crime, and were found to correlate with reduced dropped syringes (8). Decades of neglect have created an income, shelter, and housing crisis. An increasing homeless population and critical shortage of housing and shelter has left a growing number of people on the streets.

We commend the efforts of front-line workers, people who use drugs, and groups such as the Toronto Overdose Prevention Society, who have led the way in rapidly intervening in the opioid overdose crisis that has touched many of us and cost too many lives.

Forty-four people died of SARS in Ontario in 2003 (10), resulting in a timely and comprehensive response. Over a thousand people died of opioid-related deaths in Ontario last year (4) and the number is climbing, yet the provincial government is actively circumventing evidence-based and expert-recommended methods for reducing disease transmission and mortality. The government’s lack of urgency in dealing with this crisis is negligent and inhumane.

Expansion of OPS and SCS is only the beginning of the action required by the provincial government to tackle this serious public health emergency. There must be a comprehensive strategy that aims to expand access to evidence-based treatments that include opioid agonist therapy (ensuring it is available in rural regions and in correctional facilities), injectable opioid agonist therapy, intramuscular naltrexone, and other buprenorphine formulations.

As health care providers in Ontario, we call on the provincial government to immediately:

1. Allow the three already approved overdose prevention sites to open
2. Approve applications for new overdose prevention sites
3. Expand and continue funding for overdose prevention and supervised consumption sites in collaboration with Health Canada
4. Engage in meaningful consultations with people who use drugs, front-line workers, and healthcare providers on additional strategies to combat the current opioid overdose crisis

Sincerely,

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504. Griffin Epstein PhD, Social Service Work Professor, Toronto
505. Parisa Dastoori, Research Coordinator, Toronto
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>506</td>
<td>Raquel DaSilva-DeAngelis</td>
<td>BSW RSW Certified CBT Therapist, Addictions/Concurrent Disorders Counsellor, Toronto</td>
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<tr>
<td>507</td>
<td>Shawna Irons MD, Addictions Physician, Toronto</td>
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<td>508</td>
<td>Naomi Thulien NP-PHC PhD, Toronto</td>
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<td>509</td>
<td>Joséé Lynch MD CM FRCPC, Addiction Psychiatrist, Toronto</td>
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<td>510</td>
<td>Helen White, Mental Health Counsellor, Ottawa</td>
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<td>Dara Gordon MPH, Health Policy Researcher, Toronto</td>
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<td>Susan Phillips RN, Emergency Nurse, Toronto</td>
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<td>Woganee Filate MD FRCPC, Respirologist, Toronto</td>
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<td>Marlene Haines RN, Community Nurse, Ottawa</td>
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<td>Ciara Whelan MD CCFP(PC), Family Physician - Palliative Care, Toronto</td>
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<td>Tia Kiriakou RPN, Toronto</td>
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<td>517</td>
<td>Rahat Hossain MD, Resident Physician, Psychiatry, Toronto</td>
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<td>518</td>
<td>Jordana Rovet MSW BSW RSW, Toronto</td>
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<td>519</td>
<td>Jenn Boyd, Harm Reduction Coordinator, Cambridge</td>
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<td>Laurent St-Martin MD, Family Medicine Resident, Toronto</td>
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<td>521</td>
<td>Erica Kamikazi, Student Parent Support Worker, Ottawa</td>
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<td>Akia Munga, Harm Reduction Meeting/ Social Worker, Toronto</td>
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<td>523</td>
<td>Kelly OBrien RN, Emergency Nurse, Toronto</td>
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<td>Saadia Ahmad MSW RSW MEd, Toronto</td>
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<td>Wendy Martin MSW RSW, Toronto</td>
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<td>526</td>
<td>Denese Frans BSc MPH (Candidate), Community Health Worker (HIV/AIDS), Toronto</td>
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<td>Robert F. Carlson MD, Family Physician, Sioux Lookout</td>
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<td>528</td>
<td>Liza Abraham BA BScN RN, Hepatology Nurse, Hepatitis B and C, Toronto</td>
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<td>Danielle Kenyon NP, Toronto</td>
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<td>Adrienne K. Chan MD MPH FRCPC, Infectious Diseases Physician, Staff Physician, Anita Rachlis Clinic, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto</td>
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<td>531</td>
<td>Amika Gupta MPh, Program Coordinator, Toronto</td>
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<td>532</td>
<td>Kat Dearham MSW RSW, Toronto</td>
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<td>Jia Qing Wilson-Yang, Social Worker, Sexual Violence Specialist, Toronto</td>
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<td>Tyler Lamb MD, General Surgery Resident Physician, Ottawa</td>
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<td>Katharine Miller CYW, Youth Counsellor, Toronto</td>
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<td>536</td>
<td>Jeremy Lloyd A-EMCA(PCF), Paramedic, Toronto</td>
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<td>Ellen Chang MSW RSW, Social Worker, Addictions Therapist, Psychotherapist, Toronto</td>
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<td>538</td>
<td>Derek Fraser, Clerical Emergency and Trauma, Toronto</td>
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<td>Mark Blackstone MSW RSW, Toronto</td>
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<td>Sarah Addleman MD, Emergency Physician, Ottawa</td>
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<td>541</td>
<td>Rick Glazier MD MPH CCFP FCFP, Family Physician, Toronto</td>
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<td>542</td>
<td>Robyn Letson MSW, Mental Health Counsellor, Coordinator, Trauma Informed Counselling Services</td>
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<td>Alison Bruni MD, Family Physician, Toronto</td>
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<td>Megan Saunders MD CCFP, Family Physician, Toronto</td>
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<td>Dr. L Kiefer MD CCFP FRCPC, Public Health &amp; Prison Physician, London</td>
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<td>546</td>
<td>Nadine Pahor RN, Cardiac Critical Care Nurse, Newmarket</td>
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<td>547</td>
<td>Andrea Wang MPH, Public Health Professional, Hamilton</td>
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<td>548</td>
<td>Jessica Thoma MD FRCPC, Addiction Psychiatrist, Toronto</td>
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<td>549</td>
<td>Harman Sandhu MPH (Candidate), Hamilton</td>
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<td>Yolanda Dare RN, Ottawa</td>
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<td>Stan Kupferschmidt SW, Harm Reduction Worker, Ottawa</td>
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<td>552</td>
<td>Violet Umanetz RSSW, Harm Reduction Manager, Manager of Outreach, Waterloo</td>
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<td>Karine Rogers MSW RSW, Peterborough</td>
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<td>Shannon Leung MPH (Candidate), Hamilton</td>
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<td>Chris Ramsay RN, Toronto</td>
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<td>Jen Goldberg RM, Toronto</td>
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<td>Roisin Byrne MD FRCPC, Psychiatrist, Toronto</td>
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<td>Gayle Parker NP, Kitchener</td>
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<td>Katie Crosby MD (Candidate), Toronto</td>
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<td>Kayla Lucier BAS MPH (Candidate), Hamilton</td>
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<td>561</td>
<td>Andrew Pinto MD CCFP MSc FRCPC, Family Physician &amp; Public Health and Preventive Medicine Specialist, Toronto</td>
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<td>562</td>
<td>Sarah Freeman MD (Candidate), Toronto</td>
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<td>Kristin Boyer HBA, Community Health Worker, Toronto</td>
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<td>Nicholas Wang MD CCFP, Family &amp; Emergency Physician, Toronto</td>
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<td>Lily Wang MD (Candidate), Toronto</td>
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<td>Melanie Campbell MD FRCSC, Ob/Gyn, Oshawa</td>
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<td>Brendan Bailey RN, Marmora</td>
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<td>Lorin J Young MD MSc, Psychiatrist, North Bay</td>
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<td>Andrea Kwan MSW RSW, Registered Social Worker, Psychotherapist, Toronto</td>
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<td>Monica Williamson BScH MD (Candidate), Toronto</td>
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<td>Jake Crookall MD MPH FRCPC, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Toronto</td>
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<td>Nicole Buchanan MD (Candidate), Hamilton</td>
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<td>Roy Male MDCM FCFP, Family Physician, Toronto</td>
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<td>Candis Kokoski RN, Emergency Nurse, Toronto</td>
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<td>Charlie Williams MSW RSW, Individual &amp; Family Therapist, Toronto</td>
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<td>Susan Woolhouse MD MCISc CCFP, Family Physician, Toronto</td>
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589. Alex Abramovich PhD, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto
590. Caroline Senger RMT, Toronto
591. Lindsay Will RSW, Harm Reduction Worker, Therapist, Toronto
592. Chris Spiess BSW (Candidate), Toronto
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605. Teresa Cheng RM (Candidate), Toronto
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623. Sue Hranilovic NP-PHC, Toronto
624. Jennifer Chambers, Executive Director, Empowerment Council, Toronto
625. Amber LaGroix, Harm Reduction Support/Community Support Worker, Kingston
626. Sonia Malhotra MD CCFP, Family Physician, Toronto
627. Andrea Stern MD CCFP, Family Physician, Toronto
628. Yousef Obeidat, Mobile Outreach, Harm Reduction Worker, Toronto
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630. Sarah Follett MD CCFF, Family Physician, Toronto
631. Drow Zadoorian MA, Community Support Worker, Toronto
632. Diana Da Silva MSW (Candidate), Toronto
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643. Annie Foreman-Mackey MPH (Candidate), Toronto
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645. Francesca Schiavone MD, Psychiatry Resident, Toronto
646. Mahboubeh Katirai RP, Psychotherapist, Toronto
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663. Jenny Zawaly RD, Registered Dietitian, Toronto
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667. Naema Tharani, Public Health, Toronto
668. Julie Rudkowski RN, Toronto
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670. Carlee Giffen RN, Newmarket
671. Katie Connolly RN, Toronto
672. Rose Patterson NP, Toronto
673. Maya Ricker-Wilson MSW RSW, Toronto
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683. Liz Darling R, Hamilton Registered Psychotherapist, Midland
684. Julianne Lavoie NP, Mental Health Worker, Toronto
685. Mary Therapist, Toronto
686. Hannah Fleisher, Manager Health Promoter, Cambridge
687. Michael Kruse ACP Quality Improvement, Toronto
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690. Cait Maclennan RM, Hamilton
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696. Sean B Rourke PhD, Neuropsychologist, Toronto
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698. Kristel Guthrie RN, Toronto
699. Sarah Levitt MD, Psychiatry, PGY4 Resident, Toronto
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703. Laura Pacione MD MSc FRCPC, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Lecturer, Dpt. of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Toronto
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706. Linda Miller RN, Toronto
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708. Keith Johnstone MD CCFP, Family Physician, Toronto
709. Cheryl Eadie MSW RSW, Inner City Family Health Team, Toronto
710. Sherif Marzouk MD, Hamilton
711. Jason Perdue MD, Psychiatry Resident, Toronto
712. Ruth Chiu MD, Family Medicine Resident, Kingston
713. Thomas Wasiuta MD, Psychiatry Resident, London
714. John MacDonald, Health Promoter, Toronto
715. Gary Thompson, Harm Reduction Worker, Toronto
716. Brian Konik MSW RSW, Case Manager and Psychotherapist, Toronto
717. Najib Safieddine MD FRCSC, Toronto
718. Nicole Kozloff MD SM FRCPC, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Toronto
719. Anita Lathia MD, Family Physician, Toronto
720. Yi Wei Hu MD CCFP, General Practitioner, Toronto
721. Michael Douglas Scott MD, Resident Physician, Toronto
722. Nicole Powers SSW, Centennial Manor Long Term Care, Activation Aid, Bancroft
723. Dorothy Kuk MD, Psychiatry Resident, Toronto
724. Ninotchka Sequeira MSW RSW, Toronto
725. Danya Leclair, Student (Conflict Studies and Human Rights), Toronto
726. Ian Thompson MSW RSW, Housing Support Worker, Kitchener
727. Laura Hayos OT, Toronto
728. Alison Sumner MD (Candidate), Toronto
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730. Laura Ovens MD, Family Medicine Resident, Hamilton
731. Elisha MacWhirter MSW RSW, Orillia
732. Josée Sovinsky RD, Toronto
733. Peter Milliken, Director of Kingston Community Health Centres, Kingston
734. Mike Bell MA MSc, CEO, Kingston Community Health Centres, Kingston
735. Renée Charette CYC, Child and Youth Counselor, Toronto
736. Brittney Monaghan, Outreach Worker/Social Work, Markham, Stouffville
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738. Nishan Zewge-Abubaker MPH, Public Health Researcher, Toronto
739. Lynn Anne Mulrooney RN MPH PhD, Senior Policy Analyst, Toronto
740. Ceinwen Pope MD, Public Health and Preventive Medicine Resident, Toronto
741. Mara Rothschild MSW RSW, Ottawa
742. Keddone Dias, Executive Director, Toronto
743. Ann Ytterberg BScN (student), Toronto
744. Heidi Berry RN, Public Health Nurse, Hamilton
745. Kirsten Penner-Goeke MD, Resident Physician, Toronto
746. Elizabeth Mens BScN (student), Toronto
831. Tyler Watts, Harm Reduction Worker, Coordinator of Overdose Prevention Services, Toronto
832. Bahar Orang MD, Resident Physician, Toronto
833. Elizabeth Brownlie PhD, Developmental Psychologist, Assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Toronto
834. Alexandra Piatkowski MPH, Epidemiologist, Toronto
835. Bernadette Timson, Housing Support Worker (Addictions & Mental Health), Toronto
836. Ciera Gautreau RPN BScN (Candidate), Outreach, Cambridge
837. Melanie Carrington MSW PhD (Candidate), Social Worker, Toronto
838. Marisa Wijayabaskaran RN (Candidate), Toronto
839. Julia Heyens RM, Cambridge
840. Josephine Lau RN, Toronto
841. Chad Clarke HIV/AIDS Activist and Advocate, Toronto
842. Mackenzie Churchhill MPH, Student Midwife & Professor, Hamilton
843. Brandon Bailey PSC, Harm Reduction Worker, Peer Support Counselor/Mentor, Windsor
844. Alanna Kibbe RM, Toronto
845. Emily Cooper RN, Toronto
846. Madeleine Ritts MSW RSW, Mental Health and Addictions Social Worker, Toronto
847. Jean Hopkins MSW, MSc, Toronto
848. Marion Parsons RN, Toronto
849. Matthew Myers, Social Worker Student, Toronto
850. Shawn Khan MD (Candidate), Toronto
851. Ted Maloney MD CCFP, Family Physician, Toronto
852. Chih Chen MA, Housing Worker, Toronto
853. Janet Chappell PhD, Educator, Toronto
854. Jennifer Squibb, Social Worker, Toronto
855. Kira Hamilton, Harm Reduction CSW, Toronto
856. Becca Stein MA (Clinical Psychology), Therapist, Toronto
857. Stephanie Russell SSW, Social Service Worker, Supportive Housing Worker, Toronto
858. Patricia Marks MD (Candidate), Toronto
859. Faye Moreau, Follow-up Community Support Worker, Toronto
860. Ken Miller, Outreach/Phlebotomy, Rosslyn
861. Shawn Matheis MSW, Guelph
862. Alicia Taylor RSW, St Catharines

References

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