



Drug Testing Can Save Lives

Never have we known such gargantuan problems due to something so small.

Fentanyl is a strong opioid - 50 to 100 times stronger than Morphine. Minuscule doses of the drug can kill.

On Feb. 27, the city's deputy police chief told a Kanata audience that enforcement will not keep the scourge of Fentanyl from our streets.

When thousands of doses of a drug can be imported in a single envelope, complete eradication is beyond any agency.

But all is not lost, and we don't have to throw our hands up in the air and simply hope no one else dies from an overdose of opioids. We do have some tools available to reduce the harm.

Education is job one. The people most at risk need to know that any drug that they buy from illicit sources may contain opioids like Fentanyl.

One dose can kill. A few doses can create an addiction, even if the user has no idea there is Fentanyl mixed into their counterfeit pills or powders.

That message should reach everyone in the city, starting with children. The school boards are clearly doubling their efforts to make sure students know the risks.

Secondly, Naloxone - the medication that can reverse an opioid overdose - should be made as widely available as possible. The city plans to have doses in every fire and police vehicle. The province has made Naloxone freely available.

If someone still chooses to consume a drug- and that would be a bad decision - we can make the outcome less risky if allow them to test their drugs for Fentanyl.

Test kits exist. If one of our levels of government makes them available to would-be drug users, those people can find out if there is Fentanyl in a drug they have purchased.

A user who sees a positive result for Fentanyl can avoid potential death or addiction. And at the same time, they learn that the person who sold them that pill or powder cannot be trusted.

Drug testing like this has been offered at some concert festivals in the past, and it is controversial. Some will say testing condones or encourages drug use. But which is better: 1,000 people use drugs at a festival and one dies, or 1,000-plus people use drugs at a festival and no one dies?

That's the crux of harm reduction. It's why we provide free needles to IV drug addicts. It's what the Insite safe-injection site in Vancouver does. It simply saves lives.

Drug-testing kits have potential. They should be part of the discussion.

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