

October 19, 2017

Mayor Jim Watson  
Ottawa City Hall  
110 Laurier Ave West  
Ottawa, ON K1P1J1

Dear Mayor Watson,

We welcome your letter of October 6, 2017, which provides us with an opportunity to inform you of the work that the Lowertown community Association has undertaken with regard to supervised injection sites and particularly OPO's pop-up supervised consumption site at Raphael Brunet Park. We have undertaken the following initiatives:

- Public Meeting: At our regular monthly community meeting on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the LCA board member Catherine Hacksel presented background information on the pop-up site. The Ottawa Police Service and Councillor Fleury were also present to answer questions.
- We conducted an on-line survey. More information can be found at <http://www.lowertown-basseville.ca/>
- We published a document answering questions that arose following the meeting and in comments about the results of the survey.

While we don't claim to speak for all Lowertown residents, we can say we have observed a significant amount of frustration around this issue. On the one hand we see a group forced to carry out an act of civil disobedience in an effort to save lives because of wholly inadequate current and past government response on the matter. On the other, we see a group of dissenting residents who vehemently disagree with the actions and/or the philosophy of the above party. The LCA has provided a forum for them and all Lowertown residents to express their concerns. What few seem to dispute is that our city has failed to adequately address the opioid crisis in a timely manner. A lack of meaningful leadership contributed to needs that remain unmet and to insufficient services in our City.

As Dr Isra Levy said in his recent memo noting the urgent health risk facing our city: "To date in 2017, we are seeing an average of nearly 120 emergency room visits for suspected opioid overdose each month in Ottawa, compared with fewer than 100 per month in 2016." The monthly numbers are staggering: "There has also been a 22-per-cent increase in suspected opioid overdose-related emergency department (ED) visits during June, July and August, compared with January through May." Wendy Muckle of Ottawa Inner City Health reported that her organization has revived 75 people experiencing an opioid overdose in September 2017 alone.

We welcome all services that will save lives now. We welcome the opening of the Clarence Street service operated by OPH, and the news that they are exploring the acquisition of a mobile van to provide additional overdose prevention services. We received a presentation by Ottawa Inner City Health in January 2017 and have expressed support for their application, still pending, for provision of supervised injection services. Similarly we

Lowertown Community Association  
Association communautaire de la BasseVille

welcome the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre services and note the news that Ontario's Health Minister Eric Hoskins has pledged funding that will help accelerate its opening.

As a community association, we strive to provide forums and promote dialogue through various channels. We seek to represent all of our residents including those struggling with substance use disorders. We were, however, disappointed that your letter failed to mention the how your office has helped to expedite pending applications to provide much needed services. We see this as a lost opportunity to demonstrate leadership, publicly, in this important matter.

We request your commitment to ensure resources are available to save lives that are imperiled by the opioid crisis across the City and to taking action including:

- Working with other levels of government to expedite the approval process for relevant health service providers in Ottawa;
- Accelerating work on the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan to meet its objectives ahead of the planned schedule; and
- Including sufficient funding allocations in Budget 2018 to meet health, housing, safety and security needs.

I would encourage you to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation by visiting area and speaking directly with residents or attending one of our monthly community meetings. We would gladly facilitate an event where you and the relevant parties can come to the table to discuss solutions that would benefit our community as a whole in this time of crisis.

Sincerely,



Liz Bernstein  
President

CC Councillor Mathieu Fleury