



News Release

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GOOD SAMARITAN DRUG OVERDOSE ACT WALLET CARDS NOW AVAILABLE

New materials provide clarity on the law's protections

TORONTO, December 7, 2017 — With Canada's fatal overdose crisis still surging, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, in collaboration with the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council, issued 50,000 wallet-size cards with vital information about the 2017 *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*. The cards and an accompanying fact sheet will be provided to people who use drugs, service providers and volunteer organizations serving people at risk of experiencing or witnessing an overdose emergency, and stakeholders in health, social services, government and law enforcement across Ontario. The wallet card and fact sheet can also be downloaded at www.aidslaw.ca and www.overdoseprevention.ca.

Available in English and French, the wallet card outlines when the law does and does not provide protection against criminal charges and provides 1-800 numbers to call in Ontario if legal assistance is required.

Under the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*, a private member's bill introduced by Ron McKinnon, MP for Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam, both the overdose victim(s) and witnesses are protected from charges pertaining to drug possession when they seek emergency help for an overdose victim. "Many people still don't know that this law exists, while those that do are unclear of the protections it provides," said Sandra Ka Hon Chu, director of research and advocacy at the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "These cards help clarify the charges that the law does — and does not — provide protection against."

The wallet card, which has been endorsed by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, encourages people to call 911 and help save a life during an overdose emergency. "Research has identified multiple barriers that prevent witnesses from calling 911. We hope the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* and the new materials will improve 911 call rates in a collaborative effort to save lives during the worst drug crisis in Canadian history," said Michael Parkinson of the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council.

“The message still needs to get out that Good Samaritans who call 911 to report drug overdoses are protected from being prosecuted for drug possession. Equally, law enforcement still needs to be educated about this law. The work by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the Law Foundation of Ontario and the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council will go a long way in saving lives of Canadians,” said Ron McKinnon, MP.

This project was a collaborative effort and financially supported by The Law Foundation of Ontario.

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