

LEVY: The activists are wrong – decriminalization won't solve Toronto's drug crisis

By **Sue-Ann Levy** - April 3, 2023



Source: Flickr

Toronto is rife with crime and its downtown — still endeavouring to recover from the impact of the longest Covid lockdown in North America — has become a haven for drug addicts.

The ill-advised drug policies pushed by the leftists on city council and Toronto public health have plunked “safe injection sites” throughout the downtown core and similar drug-enabling sites in homeless shelters.

Yet that apparently is not enough.

Instead of recognizing that their drug policies have been a colossal failure – in fact, fatal drug overdoses keep increasing – in typical fashion, the city's leftist enablers and drug industry activists have decided to double down with a request to the feds to decriminalize hard drugs, even for youth ages 12-17.

The Toronto public health request, dated March 24 and signed by medical officer of health Eileen de Villa and the new chief of police Myron Demkiw, has been forwarded to Carolyn Bennett, federal minister of health and addictions.

Bennett is my MP and judging from what we've seen in our midtown Toronto riding, she is long on woke policies and very short on actually understanding (or caring to understand) the impact of her decisions.

I would guess that while in Toronto she doesn't venture much beyond her protected midtown neighbourhood bubble and has chosen to remain completely insulated from the harmful impacts of Toronto's drug policies.

The justification for the Toronto public health request is nothing short of ridiculous and based on limited evidence or metrics, if any at all.

The submission claims decriminalization will reduce the "stigma and discrimination" against users and make it easier for them to ask for and "access a range of health and social supports."

"Without a criminal record, it will be easier for people who use drugs to find a job and a safe place to live," the submission says.



“Possessing drugs for personal use does not directly cause harm to others.”

Let’s stop right there. The people who wrote this sound high themselves.

In what world would an employer want to hire a junkie?

Finding a safe place to live is dependent on having a job and money.

It’s clear the addicts I’ve observed on the streets of Toronto and Vancouver are using all the money they can get their hands on for their next fix.

In other words, these cities don’t have a homeless problem – they have a drug problem.

When addicts don’t have money, they turn to crime and if they’re being arrested, it’s for vandalism, theft, assault and other activities they engage in to get quick cash.

This brings me to the criminality that accompanies addiction.

In Toronto, the consensus from those living in the vicinity of safe injection sites has been that lawlessness, dirty needles, prostitution (to obtain drug money) and the presence of drug dealers increased exponentially once a site opened.

Dirty needles have been left on school playgrounds near the safe injection sites and drugged out users, who have no boundaries while under the influence, have been said to harass small children as they attempt to go to school.



The idea, according to the Toronto public health submission, that decriminalization will be accompanied by a “full continuum of downstream mental health, harm reduction and treatment services” is simply ludicrous.

Since the trendy safe injection sites – which give addicts their drugs but “safely” – opened first in Vancouver and subsequently in Toronto, they’ve merely provided a turnstile of safe injections to addicts, turning them out on the street to roam Toronto’s neighbourhoods until their next safe fix.

I spent many days prior to the pandemic observing and writing about the ill effects of “harm reduction sites” on surrounding neighbourhoods.

Like in Vancouver, which started the trend, there has been very little rehab attached to harm reduction or enforcement.

In both Toronto and Vancouver, there appears to be a zone around them which is impenetrable to police – a zone where dealers are allowed to sell their hard drugs with no issue.

On a recent trip to Eastside Vancouver, I witnessed blocks upon blocks of addicts camped on public sidewalks drugged out, urinating and defecating at will and frozen in the classic pose of a fentanyl addict (similar to a candy cane).

It was alternately sad and obscene that the powers that be have allowed it to become such a Dante’s Inferno.

The absolute failure of the policy was staring me in the face.



One afternoon, I stood down the street from a safe injection site on Toronto's Dundas St. E., watching two drug dealers ply their trade from inside a bus shelter.

On another recent afternoon, I observed a drug dealer turning up at a hotel shelter down the same street with a bag full of goodies, right beside a drug addict frozen in the fentanyl pose.

Whatever those who populate what has become a drug industry of enablers might say, the idea of decriminalizing all manner of hard drugs is simply foolish and does not bode well for Toronto's future.

Yet it seems DeVilla and the drug industry activists who support her will not be content until they transform an already declining city into a complete s---hole.

Author



Sue-Ann Levy

A two-time investigative reporting award winner and nine-time winner of the Toronto Sun's Readers Choice award for news writer, Sue-Ann Levy made her name for advocating the poor, the homeless, the elderly in long-term care and others without a voice and for fighting against the striking rise in anti-Semitism and the BDS movement across Canada.

