



DRUG PREVENTION NETWORK OF CANADA

NGO in Special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

April 19, 2021

Secretary, Philippa Williamson
Toronto Public Library Board
789 Yonge Street
Toronto Ontario M4W 2G8

Dear Dear Philippa Williamson,

Our national organization, federally incorporated in 2005, is deeply concerned about an event to take place in the Toronto Public Library, April 26, 2021.

We would be grateful if you could forward a copy of this letter to individual members of your board as soon as possible.

Our concern is that the library is organizing two virtual sessions on Monday, April 26, a forum at 6 p.m. and Dr. Hart's presentation at 7 p.m. Dr. Hart advocates the unrestricted availability and use of drugs. He is, himself, a regular user of heroin and has written a book advocating on the satisfactions deriving from drug use.

We would like to state that our organization is in full accord of the wonderful benefits provided by public libraries in making freely available access to knowledge by the public. It is an invaluable service.

However, the provision of such knowledge should not include gravely harmful information, to an uninformed public, that causes harm to life and dignity of people.

Our organization is particularly alarmed that Dr. Hart's presentation will be accessed by vulnerable adolescents who will conclude that the use of drugs is harmless, and according to Dr. Hart, are beneficial to the health and functioning in society. Such information can only lead to experimentation with drugs by adolescents, as well as others. This is extremely harmful at a time when Canada is experiencing an extraordinary number of overdose deaths by substance abuse, particularly opioids. For example, in 2020 alone, there were 5,233 deaths from drug overdose in Canada.

Contrary to the opinion of Dr. Hart, our organization believes the only way these tragedies can be curtailed is by prevention, treatment, and recovery based on increased mental and physical health care as well as social services and support to remove the

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causes of addiction, which are family instability, educational dysfunction, and poverty.
(<https://dpnoc.org/news/>)

It is not helpful to those people who are currently struggling with active addiction or grief-stricken families and communities which are coping with the tragedy of drug addiction to promote the use of drugs in our public libraries.

Dr. Hart may, as he alleges, use drugs in a “informed and reasonable manner” and if so, he is an exceptional case, but this does not apply to the general public, as evidenced by the death and destruction caused by drug use.

It is not sufficient to rationalize Dr. Hart’s presentation by the provision of a forum at which comment can be provided by the public. Although some of these comments may be based on some individual experience, they are not based on the presentation of facts by experts in the field whose position is contrary to that of Dr. Hart.

Our organization, therefore, urgently requests that the Toronto Public Library Board reconsider its invitation to Dr. Hart.

Yours sincerely,

Chuck Doucette

President

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