



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Mike Morrice

Member of Parliament
Kitchener Centre

The Honourable Kamal Khera
Minister of Health

March 19th, 2025

Re: Letter of Support for Sanguen Health Centre's Drug-Checking Program Exemption Application

Dear Minister Khera,

I am writing in support of Sanguen Health Centre's application for an exemption under section 56(1) of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to allow their Drug-Checking Program to continue operating. Two applications have been submitted for two exemptions: one for 130 Victoria Street South located in downtown Kitchener, and the other for the new mobile drug checking program that will bring this service across Waterloo Region.

These applications, if approved, will save lives in my community.

Since launching in August 2023, Sanguen's Drug-Checking Program has been an essential harm reduction tool in Waterloo Region, providing individuals with life-saving information about the substances they plan to consume. In the midst of a poisoned drugs crisis, the Drug-Checking Program has saved lives. It has been instrumental in preventing overdoses, issuing community alerts about toxic drug trends, and empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their substance use. The social and economic value of this program cannot be underestimated – Sanguen's awareness-based efforts have reduced overdose and drug poisoning risk, diverting folks from emergency services like emergency rooms, and preventable interactions with police, the fire department, and paramedics.

As you are aware, the provincially mandated closure of the Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) sites on March 31st will directly impact this program, as Sanguen's current exemption is tied to the CTS. Without approval of the new exemption, there will be a lapse in service, leaving a critical gap in harm reduction efforts at a time when Waterloo Region continues to face a devastating poisoned drug crisis.

In its first year alone, the Drug-Checking Program tested 2,750 substances and saw 984 unique clients with nearly 67% of clients reporting changes in their behaviour—such as reducing their dosage or discarding their substances—after learning the contents. Through Sanguen's CTS, over 1,049 overdoses were managed on-site, with zero deaths, from October 2019 to January 2025. Many more overdoses were prevented, simply by staff providing real-time drug supply information. This data demonstrates the program's success in reducing the risk of overdose and death.

In Waterloo Region we lost 87 people to the poisoned drug crisis in 2024. Each one was a preventable death, and the Drug-Checking Program is a critical tool in my community's efforts to save lives. It cannot operate however without this critical exemption.

Given the urgent need for harm reduction services in our community, I urge Health Canada to approve Sanguen's exemption request as swiftly as possible to prevent an interruption in this critical service. Ensuring uninterrupted access to drug-checking will save lives and contribute to broader public health efforts in the region.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Morrice".

Mike Morrice

Member of Parliament for Kitchener Centre

CC:

Aislinn Clancy, Member of Provincial Parliament, Kitchener Centre

Sanguen Health Centre