

Premier Doug Ford,

[premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

Hon. Doug Downey, A-G Ontario,

[attorneygeneral@ontario.ca](mailto:attorneygeneral@ontario.ca)

Hon. David Piccini, MPP, Northumberland Peterborough South,

[david.piccinico@pc.ola.org](mailto:david.piccinico@pc.ola.org)

April 11, 2023

Honourable Sirs:

*Re: Taking Responsibility for Safer Communities*

We all appreciate that policing is an essential tool in maintaining safe communities. We look to our community policing to ensure public safety. Sometimes that is not enough. A situation has developed in Cobourg, Ontario, that has concerned the residents of our town. Citizens have been complaining to our Mayor and Council that they do not feel safe walking the streets of the downtown core. There has been a proliferation of people seemingly high on drugs congregating and causing fear for citizen safety. This fear was expressed when a local businessperson, Mary Ito, sent a letter to the Cobourg Police Services Board complaining of drug-addicted vagrants making her and her customers feel unsafe.

There is now a local group planning to house safe injection and drug-use sites on private property where, according to the Chair of Cobourg's Police Services Board, drug usage will be untouchable. It has devolved to the Town to use land use policy as its only weapon in trying to stave off enablers of drug addicts.

The Cobourg Taxpayers Association has sympathy for our townspeople who feel oppressed by what seems to be a drug-fuelled invasion. Yet we understand that homelessness and drug rehabilitation are not municipal problems. Let's put the blame for Cobourg's unease where it belongs – at the foot of our Provincial government. A spokesperson for Canada's Minister of Justice has assured us that his department "is responsible for ensuring we have a justice system that keeps Canadians safe, respects the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and maintains the public's confidence in the administration of justice." Yet the failure of the Provincial Ministry of the Attorney General, who is responsible for enforcing the criminal law, appears to be directing that our police turn a blind eye to drug usage. That exacerbates the problems Cobourg now faces. Our Chief of Police says he is powerless in the face of provincial directives to enforce drug laws and blames a system that puts offenders back on the street, "a catch and release policy", making law enforcement impossible.

It is time for Premier Ford and his Ministers to step up to the plate and take responsibility for the seemingly intractable problems that many municipalities, not only Cobourg, face.

The Cobourg Taxpayers Association calls upon the Government of Ontario to lead the way in suggesting solutions for dealing with social problems that are well beyond the scope and authority of town councils.

Respectfully yours,

Cobourg Taxpayers Association