

Increased drug contamination a problem in Bancroft

By **Kaitlin Sylvester**

The Bancroft Community Safety and Well-being Committee shared a statement on Nov 29 released by the Hastings Prince Edward Public Health. In conjunction with community partners across the region the HPEPH has announced that the region is "experiencing an alarming and notably higher rate of" drug poisoning events. "Drug poisoning is a critical medical emergency affecting communities across Bancroft. Recognizing the severity of the situation, various measures have been established to address and mitigate the risks associated with drug contamination. The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act provides legal protection against simple drug possession charges for individuals experiencing, witnessing, or responding to a drug poisoning who call 911. This act encourages prompt action and aims to save lives without fear of legal repercussions. In Bancroft, the community has access to reporting tools like the Overdose Reporting tool provided by HPEPH. This anonymous reporting mechanism aids in ensuring that Public Health Nurses can provide necessary harm reduction services to those affected by drug poisoning. HPEPH, in collaboration with community partners, actively monitors opioid harms through the Opioid Monitoring Dashboard. This tool offers insights into early warning indicators, facilitating a coordinated response and the provision of necessary support services. Additionally, the development of an Opioid Response Strategy further emphasizes the commitment to combating drug contamination in the region. Encouraging individuals using drugs to take proactive steps to reduce risks is crucial. The collaborative efforts of HPEPH and community partners underline the commitment to supporting affected individuals and preventing further harm. One of the fundamental pillars of combating drug contamination is community education. Outreach programs, workshops, and seminars conducted by HPEPH and its partners aim to raise awareness about the risks associated with drug use, signs of poisoning, and the importance of prompt action in emergencies. Additional factors in harm reduction include a reduction in stigma, established peer networks and increased access to resources. Establishing peer support networks within the community is crucial. These networks provide a safe space for individuals affected by drug use to share experiences, seek guidance, and access resources. Peers who have overcome addiction or are in recovery often play a pivotal role in providing encouragement and understanding to those currently struggling with substance use disorders. The HPEPH is urging community partners and residents to disseminate this critical information to their networks in order to foster awareness and support in addressing drug contamination in Bancroft. Maureen Hyland and Jessica Klein, Communications Specialists at HPEPH, can be reached at the HPEPH for further information and support.