

Date: 2021-10-06

Subject: COVID-19 Improper Disposal of Sharps Mitigation Measures – Downtown Brampton – Final Update (RM 29-2020)

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Report Number: CAO's Office-2021-1101

Recommendations:

1. That the report titled: COVID-19 Improper Disposal of Sharps Mitigation Measures – Downtown Brampton – Final 2021 Update (RM 29-2020) to the Committee of Council meeting October 13, 2021 be received; and,
2. That the recommendation from City of Brampton Staff and Public Health that the receptacles in Downtown Brampton continue to be serviced by extending the current pilot program until July 2022 to allow further data to be collected to inform a Region-wide drug and opioid strategy and that future updates of the pilot will be presented at Regional Council through the Welcoming Streets program be endorsed.

Overview:

- The objective of the pilot is to reduce the amount of improperly disposed of sharps in Downtown Brampton and collect data that can be used to develop a Region-wide strategy for the safe disposal of sharps.
- Peel Public Health's work on the harm reduction portfolio was deferred due to relocating resources to COVID-19 support.
- The Region of Peel Housing Services team is also working with the City of Brampton to pilot a one-year Welcoming Streets program for Downtown Brampton, which will provide additional support to businesses and individuals in the targeted area to address loitering on private property, community safety and cleanliness.

- Continuing to service the sharps receptacles in Downtown Brampton would align with the Welcoming Streets program and provides an opportunity to promote the receptacles.

Background:

During the May 5, 2020 weekly Social Support Task Force meeting, partner organizations Regeneration Outreach and the Knights Table expressed they had noticed an increase in unsafely disposed sharps around their property.

Social Support Taskforce staff followed up with Brampton's Security Services and determined that the incidents were also increasing within Brampton's downtown.

At the May 13, 2020 City Council meeting, a motion, moved by Regional Councillor Santos and seconded by Councillors Medeiros, Bowman and Vicente, was introduced, with the operative that staff engage with the Region of Peel to collaboratively address this risk within Brampton impacting our vulnerable populations and create an action plan to address this growing concern during the COVID-19 pandemic; and that staff install "Sharps" receptacles within Brampton's downtown high incident areas; and that staff report back to council regarding progress of these actions at a future Council Meeting – May 27, 2020

In addition, at Regional Council on May 14, 2020, Councillor Rowena Santos noted that City of Brampton staff were directed to report to the May 27th City Council meeting regarding the progress of actions to address the immediate concerns related to an increase in sharps related incidents during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency period.

As such, the Acting Commissioner of Health Services and the Commissioner of Public Works undertook to work with local municipal staff and community partners to understand and address the current issue and then report back to Regional Council on a broader approach to the safe disposal of sharps in the community.

May 21, 2020, City of Brampton Staff from Security Services, Brampton Emergency Management Office and CAO Office met with Region of Peel Staff from Housing Services, Public Works and Community Partnerships to collaborate on creative solutions and next steps.

As a result of the collaborative engagement, Brampton Staff and Region of Peel Staff agreed to implement a Downtown Brampton COVID-19 Sharps Disposal Mitigation Pilot where receptacles will be installed at 11 "hot" spots as well as at Regeneration and Knights Table, and that the results of this pilot will be considered as part of the Region of Peel's work related to community safety and harm reduction.

The Agenda included:

1. A review of the May 13, 2020 City of Brampton Motion for alignment
2. Considerations for installation of Sharps receptacles
3. Longer-term work related to safe sharp disposal

4. Next steps

Current Situation:

Overall, the data shows that when the receptacles are strategically placed in high traffic areas where the targeted users congregate, they are being utilized. Community agencies provided feedback that they are seeing a reduction in the number of littered sharps in Downtown Brampton.

Note: COVID-19 Improper Disposal of Sharps Mitigation Measures – Downtown Brampton – Final 2021 Update included in Appendix A “COVID-19 Improper Disposal of Sharps Mitigation Measures Downtown Brampton – Final Sharps Update” which provides updates on Measurements, Receptacle usage and Monthly Sharps count frequency.

Corporate Implications:

Financial Implications:

No additional funding required.

Region of Peel to utilize existing contract with ESC Cares for extent of the pilot through COVID-19 emergency related funding.

Other Implications:

N/A

Term of Council Priorities:

Community partnerships – Community Safety

Conclusion:

City of Brampton Staff and Public Health recommend that the receptacles in Downtown Brampton continue to be serviced by extending the current pilot program until July 2022 to allow further data to be collected to inform a Region-wide drug and opioid strategy.

Peel Public Health’s work on the harm reduction portfolio was deferred due to reallocating resources to COVID-19 support. In the absence of having a Region-wide strategy, Public Health will promote the locations of the receptacles to their harm reduction clients and community partners, provide information to help reduce stigma around public sharps disposal and address apprehension from potential users of the receptacles.

The Region's Housing Services team is also working with the City of Brampton to pilot a one-year Welcoming Streets program for Downtown Brampton, which will address current service gaps to help both the business community and vulnerable populations thrive together. Continuing to service the sharps receptacles in Downtown Brampton would align with the Welcoming Streets program and provides an opportunity to promote the receptacles.

Sharps refer to needles, as well as items such as scalpels, lancets, razor blade, scissors, metal wire, retractors, clamps, pins, staples, cutters, and glass items. Essentially, any object that is able to cut the skin can be considered a "sharp". These items can be found in our communities, private or public properties, roads, and/or parks.

These items are a cause for concern and anxiety for the general public, and may present a potential risk of infection if they are not handled and disposed of in a safe manner. Although the risk is low, contaminated sharps that puncture the skin can transmit infectious agents, such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus, and hepatitis C virus. The purpose of this pilot program is to minimize this risk by decreasing the exposure of the public to all sharps and ensuring their safe disposal.

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Attachments:

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APPENDIX A authored by: Region of Peel Staff

References: Developing Peel's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan

<https://www.peelregion.ca/articles/2020/developing-community-wellbeing-plan.asp>