November 17th, 2020

Kevin Davis, Mayor
City of Brantford,
100 Wellington Square
Brantford, Ontario N3T 2M2

Dear Mayor Davis,

I am writing on behalf of The AIDS Network to express our concern over the recommendation of the Operations and Administration Committee to possibly suspend the Brant County Health Unit needle syringe program in the City of Brantford.

As a close program partner of the Health Unit and member of the Brant and Brantford Drug Strategy, we are very concerned about this motion. We agree with Dr. Elizabeth Urbantke that any suspension of the program will lead to further increased sharing and re-using of needles, more needles improperly disposed of and increased health-care costs associated with a potential rise in HIV and hepatitis C transmission rates. With the confluence of the opioid crisis and COVID-19, it is imperative that these lifesaving programs continue.

We have been offering prevention and support programs for over 15 years in Brantford. This includes a mandate by the Ministry of Health to provide harm reduction programs and services in the Haldimand, Norfolk and Brant areas. We work closely with the Health Unit and other service providers such as St. Leonard’s, Wesley, and the Grand River Community Health Centre to distribute supplies from our mobile van outreach program.

We are committed to continue working with the Health Unit and other service providers in the City of Brantford to find community-based solutions to increase prevention strategies and better health outcomes for individuals and the safety and wellness of the community at large. I would urge you and City Council to consult with the members of the Brant and Brantford Drug Strategy Working Groups to begin discussions in this regard.

Sincerely,

Tim McClemont
Executive Director

c.c:
Dr. Elizabeth Urbantke, Interim Medical Officer of Health, Brant County
Will Bouma, MPP, Brantford-Brant
David Bailey, Mayor, County of Brant