

# PSAC 901

Councillor Rob Hutchiston and Mayor Paterson:

PSAC 901, the union that represents graduate student workers and postdoctoral fellows on Queen's University campus, is writing a letter of support for the Integrated Care Hub. We understand that a review of the Integrated Care Hub (ICH) is in process and that the details of this review are somewhat unclear.

As a union we stand in support of efforts that value people and prioritize their safety, and the ICH has been a champion in this regard. They have been a beacon for many of our community's most vulnerable members and have ensured low-barrier access to life-saving services.

The ICH operations, despite the challenges of the pandemic, have been instrumental in lowering the rate of opioid overdoses when compared to other cities.<sup>1</sup> Harm reduction is shown to be one of the most effective ways at preventing deaths from overdoses,<sup>2</sup> 901 supports the ICH efforts in these areas. Those who access the ICH are Kingston residents that have and continue to face countless challenges resulting in deep trauma, setbacks, and continued hardships. The ICH is there to support community members who need it the most.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of transparency of the current review of ICH. The staff at the site, those who use their services, ICH's neighbours, and our community should be privy to the evaluation design, what data is being collected and by whom, what criteria or measures are framing the review, and who they are engaging as "stakeholders". Without this transparency, it is reasonable to be concerned about bias and to worry that questions of "efficiency" and cost of services will obscure the value of saving lives. In other words, how are we to know that the review centres the quality of care and services provided and asks questions like, does this service respect the autonomy of clients and people who use it? Are the staff informed about the realities that clients face? Do they operate from a place of compassion and care? Do they work with clients at their own pace to meet their needs where possible? Too often evaluations focus on a very narrow definition of value for money.

The ICH provides many benefits to our community and most importantly fills an undeniable gap for unhoused neighbours that is essential, and desperately needed. Every member of our community deserves resources to live in a safe, dignified, and respectful way. We urge city council and policymakers to recommend the ICH remain in our community and to be provided with the necessary funding needed to ensure that they can operate durably.

Sincerely,  
The executive of PSAC 901

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<sup>1</sup> King Megan and Mazur, Alexandra. "Kingston council votes through big spending on health care, homeless support," *Global News*, Kingston (November 18, 2021). <https://globalnews.ca/news/8382890/kingston-council-health-care-homeless/>

<sup>2</sup> Kerr, T., Mitra, S., Kennedy, M.C. *et al.* "Supervised injection facilities in Canada: past, present, and future." *Harm Reduction Journal* 14, 28 (2017).