



Executive Summary

Over the last 10 years, jurisdictions across Canada and the United States have experienced a significant growth in the rates of morbidity and mortality linked to problematic opioid use. The Simcoe Muskoka region has been particularly impacted by this crisis. Opioid-related emergency department visits and deaths are occurring at rates higher than provincial averages, and are continuing to trend upwards.

In response to this issue, a wide range of sectors, including health agencies, police services, emergency response services, social services, and government at all levels, have begun to develop strategies to support local communities. Through work initiated by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) and the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network (NSM LHIN), a partnership called the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) was formed in May of 2017 to bring these and other sectors together. SMOS is a regional collaborative effort addressing the opioid crisis, founded on a multi-pillar approach. This includes: prevention, treatment/clinical practice, harm reduction, enforcement, and emergency management as action pillars, along with data and evaluation and lived experience as foundational pillars.

The work of SMOS is led by an overarching Steering Committee and consists of working groups based on the pillar approach. The Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy Steering Committee created this report with the goal of providing a common understanding of the opioid crisis and the need for a collaborative response. It outlines a comprehensive plan for how the region can move forward together, to address this complex issue.

Divided into three parts, this report begins by providing contextual information on the opioid crisis and the history of SMOS. This background outlines the need for a collaborative opioid strategy in Simcoe Muskoka and details how this strategy aligns with existing approaches at both the federal and provincial levels. Part one also provides an overview on recent work carried out under the direction of the Aboriginal Health Circle to develop an Indigenous Led Opioid Strategy (ILOS). This work is an independent parallel strategy to SMOS, and is pivotal to help inform and direct the work of SMOS.

Part two details the SMOS Action Plan as two foundational pillars and five action pillars. One of the foundational pillars provides critical feedback and key information from the perspective of those with lived experience of opioid use. The other foundational pillar provides important information and direction on data and evaluation to inform the SMOS approach. Following the foundational pillars, the five action pillars are presented along with their associated work plans. For each action pillar prevention, treatment/clinical practice, harm reduction, enforcement and emergency management the goals are detailed, as well as short-term (2018) and long-term (2019-2020) activities that will be achieved through SMOS.

The third and final part provides an overview of next steps and future directions. This section outlines how SMOS will move forward over the next three years to deliver on the SMOS Action Plan.