



Photo by Luke Best

George Currie is a member of Peterborough's mobile support overdose resource team. He spends a lot of time dealing directly with opioid users who may not be ready to stop using and begin detox.

# Reaching out to those in crisis

By Luke Best

With a backpack full of clean pipes, tourniquets, syringes, snacks, and Naloxone, George Currie walks through Peterborough's Millennium Park, looking for anyone who might need a helping hand.

Currie is part of Peterborough's new mobile support overdose resource team, which is funded by the federal government. He is one of two Fourcast employees (which is a community based addiction treatment provider), one paramedic and three harm reduction specialists who are employed by PARN, (which is a community AIDS resource)

that makes up the team.

Although his team is funded by the federal government, Currie is hesitant to say the election will make any difference. "I wish I could say it was one political party or the other but I don't know if the platforms that they have will actually make a difference going forward. It's not just the federal government, it's all levels of government that are kind of failing the population right now"

Currie deals directly with people who have addiction problems, many of which don't have the means to immediately get help. Part of his job is ensuring those who are using, can do so as safely as possible, and preventing overdoses.

Two things that could be done that would directly impact his job would be decriminalization and safe drug supply.

"I think the NDP kind of gets it to some extent. I think the Green Party gets it to some extent but it's almost become a left or right issue. I hate to talk about politics because it's not something that should be politicized. It's a health care crisis and that's just how it needs to be seen. There's a lot of talk about needing more treatment, about needing more detox, and yes absolutely that's true, but no one's really talking about those people who aren't ready for treatment yet, aren't ready for detox yet, what are we gonna do to keep those people safe? A lot of

times that's the population that I deal with."

The Peterborough Drug Strategy reported that between Jan. 1 and June 30 of this year, paramedics responded to 244 suspected opioid-related calls which is the highest number of calls since monitoring began in 2018. So far this year the city has suffered more drug related deaths than COVID-19. Ontario itself has an average of 7-8 fatalities a day that are drug related.

The opioid crisis was caused by many things, and Currie thinks that it's still being swept under the rug and disregarded.

"There are a lot of people who look at someone, if they're shooting up or snorting or smoking or whatever, people look at them say "they're just doing that to get high" and they're not, they're doing that to not get sick. Now it's a case of, "I can't get out of bed if I don't have a drug in the morning" and it just makes them feel normal."

Unfortunately, there isn't a bandaid that can be used to solve this problem immediately. Justin Trudeau once said "there isn't a magic bullet" and George Currie agrees. "It's true, but you fire enough bullets and something starts to make a difference, and there are still a lot of magic things you can do to try and help people."

# A sign of political times in the Bay of Quinte

By Paige White

The day before Canada's 44th federal election there were many empty knocks on doors answered by barking dogs. Sometimes these knocks were met with just silence, other times a few shy "no's". Not everyone, even anonymously, likes to talk about politics or have their picture taken.

One of these people said they don't know where the sign on their lawn came from. They have taken it down several times and yet it keeps reappearing. Another person proudly spoke about the sign on their lawn, despite deciding not to vote for that candidate. In their eyes, this Independent isn't ready, but to support them for the future, the sign remains.

Other people wanted to engage with questions about why they were voting for their chosen party or candidate, what motivated them to put this sign on their property, or whether or not they could be swayed to vote for another party. These remaining insights come exclusively from people who agreed to be anonymously photographed with their election signs and speak about why they would stand behind them.

Regardless of party affiliation, many people advocated for their desire of change. "Even if a leader is great, if they represent ideals or values that are really misaligned with the values that I believe in - they can sit there [and talk about issues] all day but by being with their party they are endorsing things" says one person who chose to vote differently in

this election.

Other people voiced the contrary, how voting for their party was something that they had done for years, or that their party choice ran in the family. One person when asked about why they voted for their party said "it's more or less about that, it's the party I've voted for since I was younger. It's just the way I view things"

For other voters, what counts is the candidates, party leadership, and relationships. Several people spoke about not being happy with current leadership at the federal level. When voting for their local candidates, many people expressed support because their candidate is a friend of a friend, or someone they went to school with.

One person said, "I like the way [the candidate] did things. They always told the truth, and they helped people," going on to describe the candidate as honest and likeable because they have kept their promises.

Other people went into detail about the stance of their party on particular issues like retirement income, LGBTQ+ support, and income inequality. One person endorsed a party before saying they didn't want to waste their vote. Regardless of their belief in the party's stance in helping retired folks, they worried the party overall isn't strong enough. They had decided to vote for another party, on the basis of making a more realistic choice.

When asked about why people put up election signs, answers varied greatly. Ranging from "I wanted to piss off the



Photo by Paige White

A collage of Belleville residents standing with their political lawn signs ahead of Canada's 44th federal election. Residents engaged with questions about why they were voting for their chosen party or candidate, what motivated them to put the election sign on their property, or whether or not they could be swayed to vote for another party.

neighbours" to spreading awareness about less popular parties. One person said that having a sign up is "a nice way

to advertise without being a Facebook warrior". Regardless of opinion, belief, or out-

come, Belleville residents give us plenty of reasons as to why they will stand behind their political lawn signs.