

UPHNS HUB Video Call Minutes July 13, 2021

Topic:

Business for Harm Reduction: A Panel Discussion by EACH+EVERY

Attendance: 49

Presenters:

- Habeebah Adeladan, EACH+EVERY project student through the summer
- Shanika Abeyasinghe, co-founder of Bessie and founding EACH+EVERY member, also formerly employed at Calgary Drop-In Centre
- Euan Thomson, founder of Raft Brew Labs and founding EACH+EVERY member

EACH+EVERY is a voluntary collective made up of businesses who support the harm reduction movement. The panelists will speak to other calls to action they have led in their community, and what businesses can do to advocate for safety and policy change.

Presentation:

- The presenters opened with a land acknowledgement:
 - The war on drugs began with the Indian Act which made it illegal for Indigenous people to purchase alcohol, prohibition is a tool of oppression that continues to be used to this day
- 100,000 accidental drug overdose deaths, biggest public health emergency in North American
- A history of how businesses have traditionally approach harm reduction
- Example: Hamilton Carpet One Lethbridge – SCS site – posted video footage outside of their store to out people using the SCS because they didn't want that in their community
- A common narrative used by politicians: business opposition "it's disruptive to businesses"
- This narrative is completely false
- We have many businesses near SafeWorks, these businesses are standing up with us, want the services expanded not reduced. No more businesses are speaking to the media about their opposition this year in Calgary – a reversal since last year
- EACH+EVERY businesses are carrying naloxone onsite and leading public activism
- Our network is growing, we have 140 members in 6 provinces across Canada. A huge number are located near SCS. We have a role to play in supporting SCS and safe supply
- We have stickers that businesses can put on display in cities everywhere, a response to pick up the slack from the government's non-response
- We have partnered with [AAWEAR](#), an advocacy group for PWLLE in Alberta
- They taught us about what goes on out there, what to do about finding needles, and how to support someone on the street who might be out of naloxone or other supplies

Questions:

How would somebody who is curious to get started sign up?

- Visit us on our website, it is easy sign up to become a member: <https://www.eachandevery.org/>
- You can also contact EACH+EVERY at: contact@eachandevery.org

How would a person with lived experience best approach and advocate to businesses? individually? at BIA meetings? information pamphlets or in person? with or without public health allies? is it helpful to have first responders present? might it be better to have EACH+EVERY make such an overture?

- Garth Mullins was our star attendee, had some locals from Alberta – trying to find ways to bridge between the business community and community of people who use drugs
- Reaching out to AAWEAR and finding out how we can help
- Instead of calling the cops, they know to call the DOPE team. This is an important trend that we can do a better job at reinforcing with our business members.
- Important to have those direct conversations, get to know people in their community and get to know their names

What are your thoughts – do you believe it is at the centre of your organization to become more involved in harm reduction, more small businesses solely focused on harm reduction or turn a profit on a harm reduction model? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

- Look at a company like a dispensary, and a few pharmacies as well – there are potential ways that people could turn a profit on harm reduction (e.g., automatic dispensary for opioids, drug checking services).
- The main reasons the government has been adverse to funding harm reduction is that there is not a lot of money that can be made. What's the point if you can't turn a profit from it?
- These do need to be funded by public health approaches

Are you able to speak to what's happened when you engaged in advocacy at Edmonton City Council? What has been your response from government?

- Edmonton Mom Stop the Harm submitted a motion about possession, we showed up among 13 speakers, 4 businesses showed up to speak to this, ended up passing by 11 to 2 in final city council vote – it was effective and expect to see a similar thing happen in Calgary
- We haven't seen much action since these motions have been passed, it is more symbolic. Hope that the federal government will declare a national public health emergency and allocate appropriate resources.
- Starting at the city level can have an effect, want to be influencing at every level of government in every province and city
- Government says they are building policies around what they think businesses want and none of that is accurate.
- Habeebah: this summer I got to talk to a lot of councillors and some mayoral candidates, Euan had some great advice, just ask and be open – ask straight up – what is your stance on the opioid epidemic? Interesting to see a few answers – some mayoral candidates totally in support. Some were iff-y – talked about increasing police forces in certain areas, not the best way to interact with people who use drugs.

Are you finding social media effective, what other options are there ?

- I think social media has definitely helped. The last few weeks we have been doing member spotlights. People are actually coming to their stores: “we saw that you support harm reduction. We came in because of that”
- When they see those stickers, forced to ask questions, employees ask about ways they can support it
- People have been re-tweeting stuff, sharing our posts, best way to get our voices and message out there
- There is a community in Australia that wants to partner with us. The more interactions we have, we get closer to what harm reduction is. That's how we feel we can get the message out there.
- A great way to meet people is through social media, we use it as an opportunity to direct people to information and websites that completely go against what the narrative is (that safe consumption sites are a

place for people to get high), actually it is a place to connect people with resources that they would not otherwise have access to (ID, employment)

- Working with a few organizations to create a resource page, infographic, some sort of a nice image to explain what safe consumption sites and what harm reduction are all about. Would be happy to share that after

How about business that don't feel like they can safely be an EACH+EVERY member (e.g., if they are located in hostile towns)?

- We have brought on rural companies, a quarter of the drug poisonings were happening in the rural areas and the prairies, huge dearth in naloxone, even some pharmacies don't carry it
- One of our biggest targets, brewery businesses reaching out to their agricultural networks – a great direction for us and a way to make an impact.

What about the issue of bathrooms?

- Not enough about them anywhere in our society, less accessible to folks experiencing homelessness or who are marginalized in many ways. Sharps in bathrooms, blue lights. What are your thoughts?
- The urban stations – equipped with blue lights so people can't find their veins. I want that flagged, they are on our list to speak to
- Media narrative – “tired of people picking up needles and feces around their stores”
- These are two separate issues. One needs shelter and housing, and one needs an SCS. People conflate these two issues
- The bathroom issue is such a prominent one. Does pose an issue for businesses as well. There is fear about how to respond to an overdose if people are not trained
- This is your municipal responsibility as a business owner and a tax issue
- We're going through a lot of changes in our community top of priority list, access to washrooms, water, any kind of resources in general – if we opened up that criteria for naloxone, that would be helpful as well
- Naloxone distribution is free – we can get you trained by the health unit. If we had widespread criteria for naloxone training that spread to businesses and private sector – there is criteria that stops other businesses to be able to do that

Can you speak to your experience in engagement above and beyond the private sector, what successes you had and what you would like to share on the topic?

- Had some amazing conversations with local councillors, connections about community meetups that are going on in our city, a few calls with three mayoral candidates hoping to have a few more and see what their stance is. Wish I could say we had more engagement with them, because an election is coming up there is only so much we can talk about. Wish we could have an open table conversation
- At the provincial level, spoke to a few MLAs thrilled to know that we are here – evidence that the business community is with us and not against harm reduction

It is great to see the business sector joining this journey, it takes everybody to break down these barriers and walls – awesome to have this panel on – stories and courage, everything that they're doing!

Meeting Close:

Clem facilitated a moment of silence

Links and Resources:

- Jamie Livingston Tweet: https://twitter.com/dr_idlivingston/status/1414964291023872000?s=20
- Crackdown Podcast: <https://crackdownpod.com/>
- EACH+EVERY Open Letter: [https://twitter.com/ EachAndEvery/status/1408422901150224386?s=20](https://twitter.com/EachAndEvery/status/1408422901150224386?s=20)
- VCH guidance for service providers on bathrooms: <http://www.vch.ca/Documents/Washroom-Checklist-Service-Settings.pdf>
- Krasman Centre - Safer Use Peer Support Line (Ontario): Every night from 8pm-1am 1-888-233-5633