



OPIOID CRISIS

By Emily Keller

City of Grande Prairie files \$10 billion class action lawsuit against opioid manufacturers

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The City of Grande Prairie has officially filed a \$10 billion class action lawsuit regarding the opioid crisis and will be represented by the Guardian Law Group.

Last month, City committee [recommended](#) that Council participate in a class action lawsuit against opioid manufacturers.

The City has now signed on as the Representative Plaintiff in the lawsuit, which is being filed against over 40 pharmaceutical companies for their alleged role in the opioid crisis and the harm caused to communities and the effect it has had on resources in these communities and on municipalities responding to the crisis.

The lawsuit claims that these manufacturers falsely and fraudulently marketed opioids as safe and non-addictive, failed to properly perform long-term studies on the effects of the drugs, and created a false perception of safety and value of opioids in the medical community.

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“Participating in this class action lawsuit is a logical continuation in our community’s response to the opioid crisis,” says Mayor Bill Given in a release. “Each one of us in Grande Prairie has been impacted in some form by the opioid crisis, and we can recognize the very real human cost the issue has.

“It also has a very real financial toll in the form of increased costs for local governments in areas ranging from policing and emergency response services, to social programs needed to address treatment and prevention and even into less expected operational areas such as parks and transit operations.”

Guardian Law Group estimates that based on partial settlements secured on behalf of two Ohio counties for \$260 Million USD, and if the lawsuit is successful and Grande Prairie received the same amounts per capita, it could be awarded in the area of \$11.3 million CAD.

However, going forward with this lawsuit will not come at a cost to Grande Prairie taxpayers, as the City is taking part on a contingency fee basis.

“There will be no costs to the City and any fees are deducted from settlement funds only. If there is no settlement awarded the City is not responsible for paying any fees.”

Grande Prairie saw the highest rate of fentanyl related deaths in the province among major municipalities in Alberta in 2019.

The latest Alberta Opioid Response Surveillance Report from Alberta Health showed that the city had 24 people die from an apparent opioid overdose related to fentanyl in 2019, setting the rate at 32.2 per 100,000 people.

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