

Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission

Record of Discussion: April 3, 2018

1. Welcome and Personal Reflections

The Commission started their meeting by reflecting on members' experiences with the opioid crisis.

2. Review of the Past Record of Decision and Agenda and Purpose of the Day

The Commission reviewed the agenda and purpose for the one-day meeting. Members had an opportunity to update their conflict of interest declarations.

3. Co-Chair Updates

Dr. Grimsrud provided an overview of the Provincial Budget 2018. An update on Overdose Prevention Sites was also provided, which included details on the operational site in Standoff, Alberta and progress on the development of the provincial policy. Information on the progress of the ministerial order for broad naloxone administration, details on the Federal Budget 2018, and recent Federal announcements were shared.

Dr. Hyshka provided an overview of the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch announcement regarding the changes in Non-Insured Health Benefits nasal naloxone coverage. Updates regarding the supervised consumption services (SCS) in Edmonton were provided, as was information on the Edmonton Community Liaison Committee on SCS.

4. Update on Recommendations

Alberta Health provided an update on the implementation status of the approved Commission recommendations to date.

5. Safe Supply: A Public Health Approach

Dan Werb, the Executive Director of the Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation, provided a presentation which explored responding to the opioid crisis from the public health approach of treating contamination of supply.

6. Safe Supply: Hydromorphone Pilot Project

Mark Tyndall, the Executive Director of the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, provided details on the hydromorphone project that will be piloted in Vancouver.

7. Safe Supply Discussion

Members were provided the opportunity to express their thoughts on the presentations that were provided regarding safe supply.

The Commission formulated the following **recommendations**, for consideration by the Minister:

- The Minister support the department to engage in opportunities to address the contamination crisis related to street-sourced drugs. This may include the provision of a safer opioid supply to people at risk of overdose, a strategy the Commission supports, in

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principle, as one tool to address Alberta's opioid crisis, which is among the worst in Canada.

- The Minister support the department in undertaking efforts to facilitate Alberta initiating a low-barrier, oral hydromorphone distribution project, as one opportunity to address the opioid crisis and related contamination of street-sourced opioids. The Commission suggests that an Alberta-specific proposal be developed as an arm of the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control's low barrier, oral hydromorphone distribution project. The Alberta project will build off early learnings in British Columbia, and will reflect the Alberta context of the opioid crisis. The Commission recommends the Minister initiate the Alberta project by supporting the department to engage in actions that facilitate an application for funding from the Substance Use and Addiction Program (Health Canada).

Next steps: Alberta Health will explore opportunities for a safer opioid supply and will engage in actions to facilitate an Alberta application for Substance Use and Addiction Program funding. Alberta Health will also monitor the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control's project and use information collected to inform the development of the Alberta application.

8. Addiction & Mental Health

Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) provided an overview of the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs (PChAD) legislation. Members showed interest in providing mature minors additional treatment options upon being placed within a Protective Safe House. Alberta Health provided further information on the Valuing Mental Health work related to the response to the opioid crisis.

Next steps: The Commission requested AHS explore opportunities for incorporating medically-assisted treatment into the suite of services that may be offered in accordance with the PChAD legislation.

9. Alberta Addiction Service Providers

The Alberta Addiction Service Providers (AASP) provided an overview of the opioid crisis related services they provide and the resource challenges they face.

Next steps: The Commission suggested AASP explore opportunities for incorporating stigma and harm reduction initiatives that would have limited resource implications.

10. Conclusions and Next Steps

The next Commission meeting will be held May 7-8, 2018.