



Hon. Dr. Terry Lake
MINISTER OF HEALTH
Room 337, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
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Via e-mail: terry.lake.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Dear Minister Lake:

RE: DAY OF ACTION TO ADDRESS OVERDOSE DEATHS

I write to you in my professional capacity as the Executive Director of the InnerChange.

In June of this year, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development, InnerChange Foundation, Graham Boeckh Foundation and the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation took the ground-breaking step of partnering to establish the British Columbia Youth Services Initiative (BCIYSI). We are pleased with this partnership and encouraged by your efforts as a Minister of Health willing to innovate in areas where needed.

Unfortunately, as you are no doubt aware, the number of deaths in BC arising from drug overdoses in 2016 will have surpassed the number of automobile accident deaths. Nobody wants to see another accidental death in our province from *any* cause. Each person lost was someone's family member or friend. That individual once had a promising future; and his or her loss is one that we all should mourn.

So how can we prevent this from happening again? The Canadian Drug Policy Coalition has identified a five-point plan intended to help address this matter, and has addressed it to all federal and provincial Ministers of Health. This plan is available here:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/candrugpolicy/pages/104/attachments/original/1472671904/CDPC-LN_Overdose_Crisis_2_CalltoAction_August31-EN.pdf?1472671904

In your capacity as Minister of Health, I urge you and your government to address the CDPC plan and do even more in response to the overdose crisis. We note that InnerChange has also identified five further areas of action, which complement those identified by the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition. Our recommendations entail:

1. Providing ***more integrated care approaches*** to help people with, or at risk of, an addiction—including adults.
2. Finding ***more ways to empower family doctors (GPs) quickly to address people with, and at risk of, addictions***. British Columbians trust their GPs, but GPs are seldom trained to provide treatment. Newer medications and treatment approaches exist. Family doctors could use these, and help more patients, with better access to information and training on related protocols.
3. Because environmental factors can increase vulnerability to addiction, ***preventing and intervening early*** in these factors ***by helping our most vulnerable: youth aging out of care***.

4. ***More funded treatment services for youth with addictions who are in foster care—and aging out.***
When youth in care face a mental illness and/or an addiction, our system thankfully does provide added support. But when youth do age out, access to these services typically disappears. While the BCIYSI aims to help bridge this gap, and we are very thankful for our partnership with you on this initiative, more needs to be done across a wider array of communities at a faster pace. Here again, policy changes to extend funding support for treatment and prevention approaches targeting youth in care could make a tremendous difference.
5. ***Reducing unintended exposure to highly addictive substances, through support for street drug checking programs.*** Unfortunately, past and present overdose records show that at least a portion of the problem lies with drug contamination, including extremely potent, addictive and dangerous drugs like fentanyl which many users do not expect. Street drug checking takes some effort and care - but it can be done. Several European countries and cities have initiated programs to check street drugs while also managing risks and harms.

These points are discussed in more detail on our website: <http://innerchangefoundation.org/keep-british-columbians-night/>

You have served British Columbia as an elected official for many years, and I know that you are committed to public service. Please continue to help your province by using your talent, experience, and position as Minister of Health to support even more action to address the overdose deaths in our province. I look forward to hearing more in the near future about your response to this urgent matter.

Yours sincerely,



Laura E. Tate, PhD.
Executive Director
INNERCHANGE FOUNDATION

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cc: Stephen Brown, Deputy Minister of Health
Stephanie Cadieux, Minister of Children and Family Development
Lori Wanamaker, Deputy Minister of Children and Family Development
Don MacPherson, Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (dmacpher@sfu.ca)