

Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission Record of Discussion: December 4-5, 2017

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 two-day meeting. The Members had an opportunity to update their conflict of interest declarations.

3. Co-Chair Updates

Dr. Klein provided an overview of the Opioid Knowledge Exchange, co-hosted by the Federal and Provincial government, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), and Alberta. The recent CIHI reports (2) were highlighted, as was the release of the Alberta Q3 surveillance report.

Dr. Hyshka provided an update on the progress of the Edmonton supervised consumption services. Members were updated on the Overdose Emergency Response Centre recently announced by the BC government. Outcomes from the Issues of Substance Conference were noted, as well as the opportunity for Stakeholders across the province to share perspectives with the Federal Minister of Health.

4. Update on Recommendations

The Commission heard a presentation from the Alberta Health on the grants underway to implement the Commission Recommendations.

Next steps: The Commission expressed an interest in having the organizations undertaking the Commission recommendations to return at a future meeting to provide updates.

5. Federal Government Announcement

Alberta Health provided an overview on the recent Federal Government Announcement, including implications for the Province.

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

- Support, in principle, the use of overdose prevention sites, regardless of the intent to establish a permanent site, as one tool to support Albertans using substances including opioids. The Commission recommends the Minister direct the department to undertake efforts to facilitate access to overdose prevention sites in Alberta. The Commission also recommends the development of a process for the application, implementation, operations, and monitoring of overdose prevention sites for Alberta.
- Permit the use of drug testing within approved supervised consumption service sites and overdose prevention sites sanctioned by the Province. The Commission recommends the Minister further explore the potential use of these drug checking

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- services outside of supervised settings, with a focus on the experiences of other jurisdictions, and consultation with people who are using substances.
- Support the Federal Government's proposal to allow practitioners to prescribe methadone to patients without application for an individual exemption, and support the Commission in providing feedback to Health Canada through the consultation mechanism to reflect their position. In addition, the Commission suggests ongoing provincial efforts among the Ministry and related partners to support appropriate training and standards for health professionals involved in the prescribing and dispensing of methadone to ensure this drug is provided in a safe and effective manner.
 - Support the Federal Government's proposal to remove some of the regulatory restrictions specific to diacetylmorphine in the *Narcotic Control Regulations*, and support the Commission in providing feedback to Health Canada through the consultation mechanism to reflect their position. In addition, the Commission suggests ongoing provincial efforts among the Ministry and related partners to support appropriate training and standards for all health professionals involved in the prescribing and dispensing of diacetylmorphine to ensure that this drug is provided in a safe and effective manner.

Next steps: The Commission will draft letters to Health Canada regarding the Federal Government's proposals and await approval from the Minister for the Commission to provide this feedback through the respective consultation mechanisms. Additionally, the Commission supports Alberta Health monitoring ongoing pilot projects for drug checking services and the BC pilot for low barrier provision of hydromorphone. The Commission will receive updates on the progress of these projects and reserve the option to discuss the potential for these in the Alberta context.

6. Member Roundtable

Information on previous National Harm Reduction Conferences was provided by M. Taylor. Streetworks is hosting the 2018 conference in Edmonton.

Members also discussed possible outreach options for targeting populations not otherwise reached, with specific mention of development of web-based media.

The need of standards for personal protective equipment (PPE) and remediation, in the scope of public health, were also expressed.

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

- Work with related partners to coordinate avenues of available funding to support the organization of the 2018 National Harm Reduction & Drug Policy Conference.
- Develop provincial evidence-based guidelines addressing the public health risks associated with exposure to fentanyl and other substances suspected to be opioids. This should include guidance on appropriate personal protective equipment as well as standards for remediation of fentanyl contaminated sites such as buildings and vehicles.

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Next steps: The Commission appointed Alberta Health to conduct outreach efforts in an attempt to connect with individuals and organizations with prior experience in web-based media development in the scope of providing public health information.

7. Urgent public health drugs – recommendations update

The Commission was given an update from Alberta Health on the recommendations of urgent public health drugs.

8. Evaluation

The Commission heard a presentation from the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) on the provincial evaluation plan for supervised consumption services. Commission members indicated a need for interim reporting that would not be accommodated by the IHE evaluation model.

Next steps: The Commission suggested Alberta Health develop an evaluation model to address interim supervised consumption services and related surveillance reporting.

9. Communications Campaign

Members heard presentations from Alberta Health Services (AHS) on the Drug Awareness Campaign. Members provided feedback to AHS.

Alberta Health provided an update on the Public Awareness grant application process, currently open.

Next steps: Members asked AHS to provide amended campaign items to the Commission for review before launching the next phase of the campaign. Commission members also requested Alberta Health to increase the distribution of information on the Public Awareness Grant information.

10. Round table: Targeted populations

The Commission members discussed populations that may benefit from targeting interventions for opioid response. Populations identified by the Commission included users outside of the central urban core, youth, people not accessing services, and people in correctional settings.

Commission members recognized the generated suggestions as being high level and therefore in need of further consideration and due diligence. Members noted being open to formal recommendation upon the completion of further investigation.

Next steps: Commission members tasked Alberta Health with exploring options suggested by the Commission to target individuals using outside of the urban core. Alberta Health was also given the responsibility to connect with their other Ministries in order to establish

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possibilities for an inter-departmental response. Members also showed interest in having Corrections return for discussion at a later meeting.

11. Policy Development

The Commission heard presentations on both Alberta Health's and AHS' Draft Harm Reduction policies. Members gave feedback to both groups.

Next steps: Members requested both parties continue working on their policies and bring the next completed drafts back to the Commission for review.

12. MOERC Policy Discussion

Member discussions were facilitated around safe supply and safer inhalation.

Next Steps: The Commission agreed to revisit the discussion around safe supply/safer inhalation at a later meeting.

13. Conclusion and Next Steps

The next Commission meeting will be held January 29-30.