

AR 151944

JUN 25 2018

Ms. Jennifer Fuchinsky
Fatality Inquiry Coordinator
Alberta Justice and Solicitor General
9th Floor, Peace Hills Trust Tower
10011 - 109 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 3S8

Dear Ms. Jennifer Fuchinsky:

Thank you for your letter seeking the Ministry of Health's response to the third recommendation made by the Honourable Judge Jody J. Moher in the December 22, 2017 report arising from the public fatality inquiry into the death of Mr. Michael David Perreault. We wish to thank Judge Moher and related staff for their inquiry into this tragic occurrence.

The Ministry of Health has reviewed the recommendation. As Deputy Minister of Health, and on behalf of the Ministry, I accept Judge Moher's recommendation in principle.

As Judge Moher highlights in her report, the Government of Alberta considers the unprecedented rise in opioid-related deaths to be a public health crisis. Our government is committed to preventing and reducing opioid-related deaths in our province by focusing its efforts in six areas of action: harm-reduction initiatives; treatment; prevention; enforcement and supply control; collaboration; and surveillance and analytics. As part of the government's response to the crisis, we have worked closely with our health profession regulatory partners on appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices.

In addition to the various initiatives already underway, I have directed Ministry staff to work with provincial regulated health professions and other partners, including the Alberta Federation of Regulated Health Professions and Alberta Health Services, to review current practices and explore additional opportunities to ensure our province has a coordinated and considered response to responsible prescribing and dispensing of opioids.

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Some of the immediate initiatives that we will explore with our colleges and other health system stakeholders include:

- Reviewing standards of practice and other guidelines to provide any needed additional support and direction to regulated health professionals;
- Exploring additional tools to assist in responsible prescribing and monitoring of prescription opioid medications;
- Enhancing entry-to-practice and continuing competence programming to include opioid training where needed;
- Developing and participating in prevention and education programs and messaging for regulated health professionals and their patients; and
- Providing information and educating regulated health professions in harm reduction initiatives and activities.

Longer term initiatives that we will consider include:

- Amending the *Health Professions Act* to require all health profession regulatory colleges, whose registered members prescribe and/or dispense opioids to have standards of practice and policies in place to guide their members on responsible prescribing and dispensing; and
- Facilitating access to Netcare for regulated health professionals who currently lack such access and who are authorized to prescribe or dispense opioids to provide direct access to a patient's prescription history.

As Judge Moher noted in her report, the opioid crisis is a multifaceted and multifactorial phenomenon requiring a coordinated response and I anticipate this review may take some time to complete. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Andrew Douglas, Director, Health Professions Policy and Partnerships Unit, Alberta Health at andrew.douglas@gov.ab.ca or 780-422-8860.

Thank you again for bringing the recommendation to my attention.

Sincerely yours,

Original signed by

Milton Sussman
Deputy Minister

cc: Andre Tremblay, Associate Deputy Minister, Alberta Health
Andrew Douglas, Director, Health Professions Policy and Partnerships Unit, Alberta Health