

Memorandum

FROM: Malcolm Lavoie, KC
Deputy Minister of Justice

OUR FILE REFERENCE: AR 60412

YOUR FILE REFERENCE:

TO: Evan Romanow
Deputy Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
13th Floor, TELUS House

DATE: July 22, 2024

TELEPHONE: 780-427-5032

SUBJECT: **Request for a Response to Recommendations – JRA Fatality Inquiry**

Please find enclosed a copy of the Honourable Justice J.B. Champion's report to the Minister of Justice regarding the public fatality inquiry into the death of JRA. This report will be publicly released on July 24, 2024. Please do not share the contents of the report in any manner that would cause it to become available publicly prior to this time.

The following recommendations may impact Mental Health and Addiction. These recommendations are copied below, verbatim, from Justice Champion's report:

2.1 – There need to be addictions services and a recovery center out on the traditional gathering and healing parts of the land.

2.2 – There must be a review of the specific areas of responsibility and designation of jurisdiction, and the divisions and overlaps must be identified. The various levels of government must clarify and repair the interactive relationships between these bodies.

2.3 – There is a great and immediate need for provincial funding for child and welfare services support services. Many witnesses believe that collaboration between the First Nations in Fort Chipewyan and the province would be beneficial due to the specialized skills possessed by the government and the perspective and experience of the residents and leaders of Fort Chipewyan. There must be a more efficient coordination of local services that offered for mental health matters. A fully functioning ambulance and the paramedical staff that may be required must be provided to the community without delay.

2.4 – Nunee, and other proper health providers must be given the authority to call for air medical services directly.

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2.5 – *The community needs assistance and a navigator to help assist individuals with mental health issues as they move through the various levels of health care providers and someone to ensure that upon discharge, they are able to safely return to Fort Chipewyan. Appropriate follow up care in the community after discharge is vital.*

2.6 – *The establishment of an addictions recovery center in and for the residents in Fort Chipewyan must become a government priority.*

2.7 – *I encourage and urge the federal, provincial, and municipal governments to re-evaluate and revise the collaborative process to identify and change the issues that lead to inadequacies, miscommunication, and the failures to provide proper and necessary mental health resources to the Fort Chipewyan communities.*

2.8 – *As was recommended concerning educators, it is also recommended that consideration be given to monthly 'respite' breaks for medical professionals, either through additional days off and/or a financial allotment to allow them to travel to Edmonton, Calgary, or other regions of the province for at least one weekend quarterly.*

2.9 – *I recommend that a study be undertaken to consider the feasibility of such an education centre.*

A request for a response to these recommendations has also been sent to Alberta Health Services and Nunee Health Board Society.

4.1 – *I therefore recommend that the government of the province of Alberta use all its good offices and influence to encourage all levels of government in Canada to determine how to actually engage in meaningful discourse, concrete decision-making, and action plans to improve the plight of the indigenous youth in Canada who are facing life-threatening mental health crises. This may take place in the context of a royal commission, a public inquiry, or some other suitable process, but indecision and procrastination will not do. I urge the government of Alberta to push strongly for this process to be begin in earnest and to do so immediately. I leave it to cabinet to decide how best to highlight and emphasize this issue with their counterparts.*

A request for a response to this recommendation has also been sent to Deputy Minister of Indigenous Relations.

I ask that you please advise the following:

1. Whether Mental Health and Addiction accepts in principle, does not accept, or has a different response to the recommendations.
2. A brief explanation of why that decision was made.
3. If Mental Health and Addiction intends to accept the recommendations, or to implement different measures, what steps will be taken in that regard.

.../3

A response to this enquiry is not mandatory. However, be advised that this memorandum and any response received will be publicly released and posted on the Open Government Portal: <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/responses-to-public-fatality-inquiry-recommendations>.

Please email Mental Health and Addiction's response to the Fatality Inquiry Coordinator Abid Mavani at abid.mavani@gov.ab.ca. If a response has not been received by November 25, 2024 (four months from the public release date of Justice Champion's report), that information will also be made publicly available.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Original Signed

Malcolm Lavoie, KC

Attachment

cc: Abid Mavani, Fatality Inquiry Coordinator