



MODERATOR OF THE 2018 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Rev. Daniel Cho, B.A., M.Div.

Friday, November 2, 2018

The Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor, M.P. P.C.
Minister of Health,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Taylor,

I bring you greetings from the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada which met June 3-6, 2018 in Waterloo, Ontario.

The General Assembly approved a report regarding the opioid crisis in Canada. In June, it was reported that more than 4,000 Canadians died in 2017 from opioid-related overdoses. This is a shocking increase in opioid-related deaths and compounds the urgency for life-saving responses to this public health emergency.

The report highlighted how the crisis is impacting Presbyterian churches and their communities, and how churches are responding. One congregation set up a peer-support group for families with children that are struggling with addictions. The need for their work is so well recognized that they have set up a second group in a neighbouring municipality as a direct result of fentanyl use in that community. Some congregations report they keep a naloxone kit on site. Another church hosted a community forum on the opioid crisis inviting representatives from a community health network, first responders and people who have struggled with addictions. What is clear from church responses is that the opioid crisis impacts every community.

The federal government's decision to support safe injection/consumption sites is affirmed as an important measure that saves lives. Likewise, the decision that warning stickers will be mandatory with all dispensed prescription opioids and that patients will also receive a handout is a positive initiative.

The General Assembly urges that Health Canada set stronger print marketing regulations for drugs with habit-forming properties that have a high level of potential for abuse. An additional recommendation is that Health Canada develop procedures for medical professionals to register complaints with Health Canada about prescription drug print ads that are carried in professional publications such as medical journals.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this letter. I look forward to hearing from you. Rest assured of our continuing prayers.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Daniel Cho
Moderator
The 144th General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada