



FEV 07 2019
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The Reverend Daniel Cho
Moderator, 144th General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive
Toronto, Ontario M3C 1J7

Dear Mr. Cho:

I am writing in response to your letter of November 2, 2018, addressed to the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Health, regarding the opioid crisis. I regret the delay in responding.

I have read the Presbyterian Church in Canada's 2018 General Assembly Report as it refers to the opioid crisis, and I appreciate the work your church is doing in communities across Canada to support those in need, including those with substance use issues.

Addressing the opioid crisis remains a top priority for Health Canada. Through Budget 2018, the Government of Canada committed \$231.4 million for additional measures to help address the opioid crisis and problematic substance use, including one-time emergency funding of \$150 million for provinces and territories to improve access to evidence-based treatment services. This funding will support various actions to address the crisis, including addressing the stigma experienced by people who use drugs; improving access to public health data to help inform our actions to address the crisis; equipping border agents with tools to intercept fentanyl and other dangerous substances at the border; and expanding the Substance Use and Addictions Program to fund innovative approaches to treatment and prevention. More information on the Department's actions to address the crisis can be found at <http://www.canada.ca/opioids>.

I would like to thank you for your support of supervised consumption sites (SCS). Recognizing that SCS help save lives, we have streamlined the federal application process for establishing a SCS. As of November 2018, there are currently 28 SCS in operation across the country. Further information on these sites can be found at <http://bit.ly/2IPoUyi>.

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In the General Assembly Report, it was noted that Canada does not currently have a nation-wide system for tracking fatal opioid overdoses. You may be pleased to know that we are currently working with the provinces and territories to collect data and surveillance on the opioid crisis, including reporting data on opioid-related deaths to Canadians on a quarterly basis. The most recent report, from September 2018, is available online at <http://bit.ly/2RDFTXf>. In addition, we are also working on the development and implementation of a Canadian drugs observatory, which will provide a national focal point for drug data collection and reporting, and will help us identify emerging trends more easily.

The Government of Canada has put in place measures to restrict the marketing of opioids. Health Canada is imposing or amending terms and conditions on prescription drug opioids. Manufacturers will have to submit an opioid risk management plan, and an advertising preclearance agency will need to review all opioid marketing materials intended for health care professionals. This review will ensure that materials disseminated are evidence-based, balanced and compliant with the Department's advertising regulatory framework.

An expert advisory group on the marketing of opioids will provide Health Canada with input and advice regarding the evidence on the extent, impact and value of the pharmaceutical industry's marketing and advertising of opioids.

Furthermore, the Department has created a dedicated marketing compliance and enforcement team. This team will proactively monitor opioid marketing to enforce the existing rules around improper advertising, and to take action where necessary, including recommending criminal charges where appropriate. Health Canada continues to consider and explore various additional measures to further restrict the marketing of opioid products in Canada.

Thank you for writing on this important issue. I hope that you will find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Boudreau', is positioned above the printed name.

Michelle Boudreau
Director General
Controlled Substances Directorate
Controlled Substances and Cannabis Branch