



February 14, 2022

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Their Worship Fred Haynes  
Mayor of The Corporation of the District of Saanich  
**Email: Mayor@saanich.ca**

Dear Mayor Haynes:

Thank you for your letter of May 21, 2021, regarding the recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest into the death of Elliot Eurchuk. I apologize for the delay in our response and would like to ensure you we are working hard to create an improved system of mental health and substance use care in alignment with the recommendations from the [Coroner's Inquest](#).

The ministries of Education (EDUC), Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA), Health (HLTH), and Children and Family Development (MCFD) are working closely together to implement [A Pathway to Hope](#) (Pathway), our government's strategy for improved mental health and addictions care for people in British Columbia. Pathway lays out a 10-year vision for mental health and substance use care, and outlines priority actions including initiatives to improve the wellness of children, youth, and young adults.

*A Pathway to Hope* builds on ongoing work to address the overdose crisis by building out the voluntary system of substance use care and enhancing wraparound supports in communities. Government more recently released a Progress report on Pathway that may be found [online](#).

Through Budget 2021, the Province has invested \$97 million in expanded mental health and substance use services for children and youth, including prevention and early intervention services. Investments include expanded mental health funding in schools, and funding to mitigate gaps in community-based and school-linked prevention and early intervention services across British Columbia.

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Below you will find the recommendations to the Ministries of Education and Health from the Coroner's inquest and how we are actioning them.

***1. Develop processes for early detection of mental health and substance use disorders within schools.***

Since September 2017, the Province has invested \$13.9 million in funding for school district mental health initiatives and grants spanning four years. In September 2020, the Ministry of Education released a new [Mental Health in Schools Strategy](#), outlining a vision and pathway for mental health promotion in the K-12 education system. The strategy can be found on the Province's [Mental Health & Well-Being webpage](#).

Prevention of problematic substance use is a key action in the strategy. In March 2021, the Ministry of Health created a provincial resource for enhancing substance use prevention in BC schools to reduce harms related to substance use for older elementary school students and high school students.

***2. Develop and implement a plan to transition youth from acute care and addiction treatment facilities to schools.***

The Ministries of Health, Education, Mental Health and Addictions, and Children and Family Development, and all Health Authorities are currently implementing Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) Teams in 5 school districts, and Budget 2021 provides funding to expand to an additional 15 school districts across British Columbia by the end of 2023/24, adding over 350 new full-time employees.

Integrated Child and Youth Teams are community-based multidisciplinary teams that deliver wraparound mental health and substance use services, and will work closely with schools, early years services, and primary and acute care, connecting young people to specialized and higher intensity services when needed. Core team members include program leaders, child and youth mental health clinicians, youth substance use clinicians, education counsellors, youth and family peer support workers, and Indigenous roles such as Elders, Traditional Healers, and support workers.

Integrated Child and Youth Teams will support youth transitioning between acute care and addiction treatment facilities to school, home, and community supports.

***3. Provide education to students, parents or guardians, teachers, and administrators on mental health and substance use disorders.***

British Columbia introduced the new Physical and Health Education (PHE) curriculum, providing students with a more holistic view of health and well-being. Starting in Kindergarten and throughout the PHE curriculum, students learn about promoting mental well-being for themselves and others.

The Ministry of Education has also recently expanded the ERASE [website](#) which provides students, families, and teachers information on mental health, well-being, and substance use. The ERASE website includes substance use content written from a harm reduction lens, and resources for students, families, and educators. External links on the site also follow harm reduction principles.

Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators (EASE) provides educators with resources on anxiety prevention for use with students in Grades K-7. In addition to expanding to Grades 8-12, web-based workshops and classroom resources are also available. [EASE](#) at Home offers helpful tips for parents, such as teaching children calming breathing techniques or using structured games like scavenger hunts to build routines in a fun and engaging manner.

**4. *Develop and implement a plan to transition youth from health care facilities back to community-based services.***

In addition to expanding community services supporting youth transition between hospitals, home, and schools, specialized “Step-Up/Step-Down” outreach services are being implemented in communities across British Columbia. These services wraparound and support a young person experiencing their unique mental health and/or substance use challenges and helps transition youths between higher “Step-Up” care and lower level “Step-Down” services based on the intensity of their health needs.

**5. *Streamline and coordinate access to all available youth residential substance use disorder treatment beds and youth mental health care beds within British Columbia.***

The ministries of Health and Mental Health and Addictions, in partnership with Health Authorities, including the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), are collaborating to address the barriers to accessing community and provincially available bed-based substance use treatment services for youth. The partners are working to find evidence-informed and promising practices to improve models of care to support youth experiencing substance use challenges.

This work includes improving resources and amending legislation to strengthen the quality, consistency, and oversight of bed-based supportive recovery services, as well as investing in new treatment and recovery beds.

**6. *Provide youth with more long-term residential substance use disorder treatment facilities throughout British Columbia.***

In August 2020, a new facility opened in Chilliwack with 20 youth substance use beds, the first youth beds available in the Fraser Health region. That same month the Province announced it will add a further 123 new youth substance use beds across BC. Thirty of these beds have already been implemented, including 6 in the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), and the remaining 93 beds are being planned with Health Authorities and Indigenous partners.

Additional work in Greater Victoria since 2018 includes:

- VIHA has implemented four Withdrawal Management beds on the pediatric unit of Victoria General Hospital to provide urgent medical withdrawal management and concurrent disorder intervention, and one augmented support bed in the community. Island Health has also implemented a Youth Intensive Case Management Team (YICM Team) in Victoria. This multidisciplinary team is integrating the provision of direct services with the coordination and navigation of services. The YICM team supports youth aged up to 24 years who present with chronic, pervasive, and complex substance use and/or concurrent disorders, and who are not well served through existing Child Youth and Family Mental Health and Substance Use programs.

- Foundry Centers, including Foundry Victoria, provide access to supports and services for youth between the ages of 12 and 24 and their families. Services are provided in a safe and judgment-free environment where youth living with mental health and substance use challenges can ask once and get help fast. Services include primary care, peer support, and social services under one roof. Foundry Virtual App was launched in March 2021, in response to increasing demand, and allows Foundry's services to be available using voice, video, and chat.
- In 2020-2021, approximately 1,400 different youth accessed services through Foundry virtual services and approximately 1,300 different youth accessed services through Foundry Victoria.

We are working hard to ensure all young people get the help they need when they need it, and that they feel safe and connected when doing so from their homes, at school, and in the community. Building a system of care while fighting two public health emergencies means there is more work underway and more to do. Thank you again for your commitment to promoting well-being for all BC students.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Whiteside  
Minister of Education



Sheila Malcolmson  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

pc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier  
Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health