

October 31st, 2022

Letter Sent to:

Honourable Heather Stefanson, Premier, via email only: premier@leg.gov.mb.ca

Honourable Audrey Gordon, Minister of Health, via email only: minhealth@leg.gov.mb.ca

Honourable Sarah Guillemard, Minister of Health and Community Wellness, via email only: minmhcw@leg.gov.mb.ca

Honourable Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, via email only: minjus@leg.gov.mb.ca

Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister of Families and Status of Women, via email only: minfs@leg.gov.mb.ca

Honourable Alan Lagimodiere, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, via email only: minirnr@leg.gov.mb.ca

OPEN LETTER – Urgent Action Required for Direct Action to address the Overdose Deaths and Toxic Drug Supply in Manitoba

To Whom It May Concern,

Manitoba has been in an overdose crisis due to a toxic drug supply since 2016. In 2021 the province had a record number of 407 deaths which is a rate of 30/100,000 Manitobans dying last year; an increase from 372 in 2020. Data suggests that even more Manitobans will die in 2022 current numbers for the first half of the year are over 250 deaths. This week alone, the community has seen an increase in deaths due to a toxic supply of drugs in Winnipeg; with the community reporting five (5) deaths due to overdose in shelters and in the City of Winnipeg. This is not just an issue in Winnipeg, as communities in rural, remote, and Northern Manitoba are reaching out for support to address overdoses and overdose deaths in their communities; a single community reported 22 overdoses and 9 deaths in a 3 month period.

As community organizations on the front line of the overdose crisis we are asking for immediate actions that will provide us with the tools and resources needed to respond to this crisis. We are working tirelessly to ensure not one life is lost. Our spaces have become injection sites, our door ways, washrooms and alleyways are overdose response sites, and yet this is not enough, we need action now.

Manitobans are asking for action in a recent Probe Research poll from October 21, 2022- “Eight in ten Winnipeggers (81%) also support creating a safe consumption site for those who use drugs”

To reduce the number of Manitoba’s dying from drug poisoning, we need immediate and robust actions that are grounded in human rights and a public health approach. We are calling on all levels of government to:

- 1. Declare a public health emergency OR Publicly acknowledge the overdose crisis to ensure all Manitobans are aware of the current public health crisis;**

2. **Provide immediate support for a Mobile Overdose Prevention Service and provide funding to equip the MOPS with drug testing technology (FTIR Machine) reduce overdoses and drug poisonings;**
3. **Expand access to a Safe Supply of all drugs in Manitoba, an evidence-based public health measure that will reduce overdoses and drug poisonings;**
4. **Provide immediate support and funding for Supervised Consumption Sites and Services in Winnipeg as well as rural communities showing readiness. This includes Pop-Up Safe Consumption services that can respond to communities in the moment to reduce overdoses and drug poisonings;**
5. **Provide overdose data in a timely manner that will allow community based organizations to respond in the moment to reduce overdoses and drug poisonings;**
 - a. This includes data sharing and accountability with Police (WPS, RCMP) and Fire Paramedic Services.
6. **Provide funding for frontline organizations to expand and develop programing to respond to the crisis to reduce overdoses and drug poisonings;**
7. **Recommend that police forces immediately and for the duration of this public health emergency cease expending resources on the enforcement of simple possession of illicit drugs and related offenses;**

All of the harm reduction interventions are supported and validated by academics, public health experts and People Who Use Drugs to save their communities. We urge you to act strongly and proactively on these calls. We respectfully ask for a meeting with all of you as soon as possible to discuss.

As a community we are coming together to promote and support educating the public on the needs in our community and the crisis we are working through. We hope this can be shared work with all levels of government.

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Signed:

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- Spence Neighbourhood Association
- Central Neighbourhood Association
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- Winnipeg Harm Reduction Network

- Resource Assistance for Youth
- Siloam Mission
- End Homelessness Winnipeg
- N'Dinawemak
- Manitoba Harm Reduction Network
- Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba Inc (SERC)
- The Link: Youth and Family Supports
- Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre of Winnipeg Inc"
- Giigewigamig First Nation Health Authority
- Nine Circles Community Health Centre
- Northwest Interlake Harm Reduction Network
- Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
- Brandon and Area overdose Awareness Inc
- The Women's Resource Centre - Brandon, Manitoba
- Play it Safer Network-Flin Flon-Manitoba Harm Reduction Network
- Play It Safer Network - The Pas/OCN (Manitoba Harm Reduction Network)
- The Selkirk Friendship Centre
- MFL Occupational Health Centre
- Hope Centre Health Care Inc.,
- Substance Consulting
- North End Women's Centre
- Mount Carmel Clinic
- Aboriginal Health and Wellness Clinic
- Smart recovery Brandon Manitoba
- Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre
- Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
- Zaagi'idiwin Full Spectrum Indigenous Doulas
- Manitoba Health Coalition
- Safer Choices Northern Network (SCNN)
- Bar None Winnipeg
- Overdose Awareness Manitoba
- North Point Douglas Women's Centre
- Manitoba Moms Stop the Harm Advocacy Group
- Winnipeg Police Cause Harm
- Recovery Day Brandon
- Under One Roof - Crisis Prevention Task Force
- WE24 - West End Twenty Four Hour Safe Space
- Peg City Kindness Crew
- Chelsea Grove
- Ken St.George on behalf of Albert House Inc
- Interlakes Reserves Tribal Council

- Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition (SWWAC)
- Art City Inc.
- West Broadway Community Organization
- Of no fixed address advocacy radio
- Police Free Schools Winnipeg
- Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1505
- Women's Health Clinic
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba office.
- Manitoba Young New Democrats
- Young United Church
- Survivor's Hope Crisis Center
- Interlake FASD Coalition
- Centre de santé Saint-Boniface
- Klinik Community Health
- Main Street Project
- Manitoba Association of Community Health
- Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc. (KIM)
- The START Program
- IJustCity Inc
- Hope Mennonite Church Justice Team
- Joanna Lynch, MD, CCFP(AM), FCFP- President of the Manitoba College of Family Physicians
- Chrissy Rowan- Selkirk Primary Care Clinic
- Kildonan Medical Centre
- University of Manitoba
- Northway Pharmacy
- Leila Pharmacy
- ONE Recovery
- Phoenix Recovery
- O.A.T Program - Four Arrows Regional Health Authority. Red Sucker Lake, MB.
- Rural Parkland Family Medicine Program and Dauphin Regional Health Center
- SEED Winnipeg Inc.
- NRHA
- Crossways in Common
- Manitoba HIV Program
- Rural Parkland Family medicine residency program.
- West Broadway Tenants Committee
- Project Safe Audience
- Rafiq Andani
- Northern Connection Medical Centre
- Simplicity Wellness

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