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CHIEF CORONER

Ms. Lisa Lapointe
Chief Coroner
BC Coroners Service
PO Box 9259 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9J4

Dear Ms. Lapointe:

We are writing in response to your recent report, *Supporting Youth and Health Professionals: A Report on Youth Suicides*, and to your letter of August 6, 2019. We apologize for the delayed response.

Thank you for your comprehensive review and recommendations that identified key areas of focus to prevent youth suicides.

The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the Ministry of Education (the ministries), accept in principle, the recommendations in *Supporting Youth and Health Professionals: A Report on Youth Suicides*, acknowledging that specific actions will require further consideration and discussion to ensure they are aligned with work underway and are consistent with best practices. The ministries truly value the work of the BC Coroners Service and death review panel members to address suicide deaths of young people in BC. The ministries jointly considered the report and its recommendations and will continue to work together to ensure that mental wellness services for children and youth are being addressed in a coordinated and integrated fashion.

In June 2019, the Province released *A Pathway to Hope: A roadmap for making mental health and addictions care better for people in British Columbia* (the Roadmap), which is designed to improve the mental health and wellness of all people living in British Columbia by ensuring people get access to the services they need to tackle problems early on. The Roadmap focuses on supporting the wellness of children, youth and young adults, supporting Indigenous-led solutions, improving substance use care, and improving overall access and quality of mental health and substance use care. The Roadmap can be accessed here:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/mental-health-and-addictions-strategy/bcmentalhealthroadmap_2019web-5.pdf

Issues such as youth suicide will be addressed through child and youth priority actions focused on prevention, early intervention, and integrated care. These actions aim to prevent problems before they start, promote early interventions, reduce the impact of mental health and substance use challenges and provide seamless, youth-driven care.

In response to the recommendations from the inquest, the ministries provide the following responses:

Recommendation 1:

Adopt mental wellbeing strategies as part of social emotional learning for students.

- *By September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and the Ministry of Health, will enhance social emotional learning curriculum to foster mental health literacy and mental wellbeing coping skills from K-12.*

The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, Ministry of Education, First Nations and Indigenous partners are working in collaboration to address school-aged children and youth and work to foster their social and emotional wellbeing particularly in their early years. Enhancing social emotional learning and development are targeted actions within the Roadmap. These actions include creating professional development tools to increase capacity to promote early childhood healthy social and emotional development, providing evidence-based and culturally-aware programs that focus on prevention and wellness promotion activities in K-12 schools provincially, and establishing Integrated Child and Youth Teams.

Recommendation 2:

Identify and distribute provincial best practice youth mental health guidelines.

- *By September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development will identify and distribute best practice guidelines for matching best practice therapies with youth mental health diagnoses.*
- *By September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, will identify and distribute best practice psychiatric medication guidelines for young people.*
- *By September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, will review current psychiatric medication prescribing practices to determine if the prescribing practices identified in this report are reflective of psychiatric medication prescribing practices for children in general.*

The Ministry of Health, Ministry Mental Health and Addictions, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively to support the identification and distribution of provincial best practice youth mental health guidelines. We will work collaboratively to identify timelines and deliverables that coincide with current government initiatives and our ministries respective roles.

Recommendation 3:

Expand specialty youth mental health and psychiatric services to non-urban areas through outreach models.

- *By September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, will improve access to specialty youth mental health and psychiatric services to non-urban areas through telehealth/virtual care and outreach models.*
- *By September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, will expand training opportunities for local health professionals when mental health/psychiatric specialists are providing outreach services.*

The ministries will continue to work collaboratively to address this recommendation. Work is already underway to increase timely access to appropriate mental health and substance use services for non-urban areas through telehealth and virtual care services. For example, a 24/7 counselling and referral service is currently being developed for post-secondary students across the province and will include telephone and online chat capabilities. In addition, a web-based portal is being created to outline where services are located throughout the province.

Furthermore, the Roadmap includes a focus on ensuring youth and families can access mental health, substance use and primary care treatment through the expansion of Foundry sites across the province. Foundry brings health and social services together in a single place to make access easier for youth to find the care, connection and support they need. Foundry also includes an online component (foundrybc.ca) which is a youth and young adult-focused interactive website that offers self-assessments, referrals, and early supports. Currently, Foundry continues to build out their continuum of e-health services.

We thank the BC Coroners Service and the death review panel for their report. We are committed to working alongside our partners to identify and develop best practice youth mental health guidelines, improve mental wellbeing strategies in the school setting, and expand mental health and psychiatric services to non-urban areas.

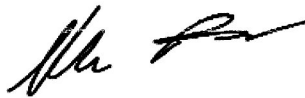
Sincerely,



Stephen Brown
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Health



Neilane Mayhew
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions



Allison Bond
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Children and Family
Development



For D. Scott MacDonald
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Education

pc: Honorable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health
Honourable Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Children and Family Development
Honorable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education
Ms. Deborah Pawar, Director, Child and Youth Mental Health Policy,
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ms. Barbara Casey, Executive Director, Child and Youth Mental Health Policy,
Minister of Children and Family Development
Ms. Cheryl May, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Legislation,
Minister of Children and Family Development
Mr. Alex Scheiber, Deputy Director, Child Welfare and Aboriginal Services,
Minister of Children and Family Development
Ms. Cory Heavener, Provincial Director, Child Welfare and Aboriginal Services,
Minister of Children and Family Development
Ms. Teresa Dobmeier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery,
Minister of Children and Family Development