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MINISTRY OF SOLICITOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CORONER

Ms. Lisa Lapointe
Chief Coroner
Province of British Columbia
Office of the Chief Coroner
800-4720 Kingsway
Burnaby BC V5H 4N2

Dear Ms. Lapointe:

Thank you for your letter of March 31, 2014, regarding the release of the BC Coroners Service Child Death Review Panel Report and your question about government's plans to address recommendation number three:

The First Nations Health Authority, The Community Against Preventable Injuries, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and community stakeholders collaborate to identify the audience of parents/caregivers who are most likely to benefit from receiving messaging about infant safe sleep positioning and the risks of bed sharing and substance use and then implement a plan that reaches the target audience with that messaging.

The Government of British Columbia is committed to ensuring that all children have the best possible start in life, and that families and caregivers know how to prevent injuries and harm to infants and children. The Ministry of Health (the Ministry), in collaboration with health authorities and key partners, is engaged in a number of initiatives to provide families, parents and caregivers with information about infant safe sleep recommendations.

As identified in your report, in 2011, Provincial Safe Sleep Environment Guidelines for Infants 0-12 months of age were finalized. A poster and parent brochure called *Every Sleep Counts* was distributed to community and acute care settings and the brochure is provided to all new families. In addition, provincial parenting resources *Baby's Best Chance*, *Toddler's First Steps*, the *Healthy Families BC* website and *BCHealthfiles* were updated to include information about infant safe sleep practices and how to reduce environmental risk factors. As you also identified, in 2013, the Ministry worked with First Nations and Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health Committee and Perinatal Services BC to develop a community toolkit called *Honouring Our Babies: Safe Sleep Cards & Guide*. This tool kit has been distributed to all First Nations communities for use in prenatal and parenting groups.

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Also in 2013, an inter-ministerial protocol, *Roles and Responsibilities of the Director (Child, Family and Community Service Act) and the Ministry of Health: For Collaborative Practice Relating to Pregnant Women At-Risk and Infants At-Risk in Vulnerable Families*, was developed. The protocol supports a coordinated and family-centred approach to better meet the needs of vulnerable pregnant women, infants and families, and to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for a child.

Unexpected death in infancy is a tragic event. The Ministry is committed to actively working with all partners to support families in acquiring the parenting skills and knowledge to keep babies safe while sleeping.

The Ministry, through representation on First Nations and Aboriginal maternal and child health committees, will continue to work collaboratively with the First Nations Health Authority and First Nations communities to promote greater awareness about infant safe sleep environments, improve perinatal support to families, and assist communities in addressing disparities in infant health and mortality rates.

The Ministry, through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Provincial Health Service Authority for operations of BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit, will facilitate discussions with the *Community Against Preventable Injuries* to explore opportunities to promote public awareness to prevent sudden infant death.

Additionally, the Ministry will continue to work with health authorities and other health and social service providers who provide care and services for new mothers, infants and families to identify more vulnerable groups that may benefit from additional safe sleep education and support.

I am also able to confirm that the BC Ambulance Service will be working with the BC Coroners Service (BCCS) to jointly develop standardized questions that paramedics will answer when documenting cases where infants die suddenly. These standardized questions will support information gathering and investigative reviews by the BCCS. This information will help us better inform families of preventable risk factors for sudden infant death.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terry Lake".

Terry Lake
Minister