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Ms. Lisa Lapointe
Chief Coroner
Office of the Chief Coroner
PO Box 9259
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9J4

Dear Ms. Lapointe:

Thank you for your letter dated January 27, 2020, and for providing a copy of the Verdict with Coroner Comments concerning the death of Elliot Eurchuk, which occurred in Oak Bay, BC on April 20, 2018. I apologize for the delayed response.

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) has carefully read the Verdict and reviewed the three recommendations directed to the Ministry.

Recommendation 4:

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

We understand that Elliot was admitted to and discharged from hospital multiple times in the years prior to his death. While he was repeatedly admitted to hospital for care related to sports injuries, Elliot was also admitted to Victoria General Hospital under the *Mental Health Act*. We understand too that Elliot was consuming opioids (Dilauded/hydromorphone) both prior and subsequent to being prescribed this and other opioid medication for pain management following surgeries for his jaw and shoulder. In at least two instances, when he was discharged from Victoria General Hospital, there is evidence that discharge planning was conducted with Elliot and his parents, including discussion of harm reduction regarding drug use, supports for the family and information on services for Elliot.

The Ministry is currently working with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to develop an Acute to/from Community Transitions Agreement, which provides a provincial framework for local protocol development regarding child and youth mental health and substance use (MHSU) services. This protocol framework will guide the development of regional and local protocols by outlining provincial expectations and service principles required to support effective transitions for children, youth and their families who are transitioning between acute and community-based MHSU services.

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In June 2019, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA) released *A Pathway to Hope*, a 10-year plan that outlines a system-wide MHSU strategy. A priority focus over the next three years is to improve the wellness of children, youth and young adults with initiatives geared toward prevention, early intervention and wellness promotion as well as seamless and integrated care.

These initiatives include establishing Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) Teams, community-based and multidisciplinary teams that will deliver wraparound MHSU supports for children and youth so that families and caregivers do not have to navigate the system on their own. ICY Teams will provide outbound services by reaching children and youth in their own environments. Teams will also work closely with schools and primary care to help with the early identification of those who may need support, and assist them with accessing the right services including specialized and higher intensity services when needed. ICY Teams will also support children, youth and their families as they transition to and from higher intensity services back into the community and school. The Ministry is working closely with the MMHA, MCFD, Ministry of Education, and Indigenous partners to implement ICY Teams in five school districts, with Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows and Comox being the first two school districts that have been announced.

Recommendations 5 and 6:

- Streamline and coordinate access to available youth residential substance use disorder treatment beds and youth mental health care beds within British Columbia.
- Provide youth with more long term residential substance use disorder treatment facilities throughout British Columbia.

The Ministry, in partnership with the MMHA and health authorities, including the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), are collaborating to assess and address the complexity of issues impacting access to community and provincially available bed-based substance use treatment services for youth. This includes consideration of evidence-based and promising practices for improved models of care to support youth who are experiencing substance use problems in an era where youth are also experiencing increasingly complex, behavioural and concurrent mental and physical health challenges.

Regional health authorities continue to identify, implement and/or modify services to most appropriately address the need within their communities. For example, since 2018:

- Island Health 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.
- Interior Health has implemented two YICM Teams (one in Kelowna and one in Kamloops).
- Fraser Health will be opening a 20-bed youth substance use treatment centre in Chilliwack (targeted for Spring 2020) which will provide specialized treatment for youth aged 13 to 18 years throughout Fraser Health who face significant substance use challenges.
- Northern Health has made three beds at the Nechako Youth Treatment program available to youth from anywhere in the province.

In September 2018, the PHSA also launched *Compass*, a province-wide, evidence-based telephone support for clinicians providing care for youth (aged 0 to 25 years) with MHSU concerns. This service supports primary and community care providers with information, advice and resources to deliver appropriate and timely care, helps providers to navigate MHSU services, and streamlines access to specialized services including bed-based treatment options.

Together with our partner ministries, health authorities and Indigenous rightsholders, we are committed to improving MHSU services so that they better meet the needs of children, youth and their families.

We appreciate the work of the BC Coroners Service in providing recommendations towards preventing future tragedies and thank you for this opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,



Stephen Brown
Deputy Minister