



**Health Matters Newsletter  
July 17, 2020  
Today's Health Matters Includes:**

- Meeting Schedule
- Community Meetings
- News Release re: Safe Drug Supply for Cowichan Pilot Project
- Municipality of North Cowichan Official Community Plan Update – Visioning Process to Begin- Stay Tuned
- Patient and Peer Network Seeking Representatives
- Helpful Links During COVID Crisis



*Its easy to social distance out here!*

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- ✓ **Next Admin Committee Meeting July 22 3:30 Cowichan Women Against Violence**
  - ✓ **Next Our Cowichan Network Meeting **September 10 In Person Meeting Mellor Hall- Cowichan Exhibition Grounds 5:15-7:30****
  - ✓ **Next EPIC Committee Meeting- **July 16 1:15 pm-2:15 pm Teleconference Call****
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**Community Events- Meetings**

- **Community Action Team (CAT) Meeting 9:00 am July 23, 2020, TELECONFERENCE 1-844-445-4475 Access Code 4381 5922** Due to the large number of participants **Please send Email to Cindy if you are going to be on the call to assist with Moderation – technical difficulties may occur due to busy systems- keep trying to get on line so line will be open 10 minutes early**

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## News Release

### For Immediate Release

## Government of Canada supports safer supply pilot project in B.C.

*Life-saving initiative will provide pharmaceutical-grade medication as alternative to toxic drug supply during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond*

July 15, 2020

Ottawa, ON

Health Canada

The opioid overdose crisis continues to be one of the most serious public health crises in Canada's recent history. Tragically, in many communities, the COVID-19 pandemic is worsening this crisis. The Government of Canada continues to support communities across Canada as they respond to drug overdoses and harms during the pandemic.

Today, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, along with the Honourable Judy Darcy, B.C. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and Dr. Richard Stanwick, Chief Medical Health Officer, Island Health, announced approximately \$2 million in funding for a pilot project within Island Health. The innovative project will provide pharmaceutical-grade medication as an alternative to the toxic illegal drug supply for people in Cowichan Valley who have not responded to other forms of treatment for opioid use disorder.

This project will allow selected patients at risk of overdose to have access to hydromorphone tablets from a licensed prescriber at the Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre. The patients will also receive critical wrap-around services, such as peer support, medical care, mental health support and a personal support plan. This project is a four-year pilot that will provide valuable evidence to support the development of best practices for safer supply programs.

Expanding access to safer supply pilot projects, such as this one, is one way Health Canada and the province are helping to save lives and improve health outcomes. The Government of Canada and British Columbia also continues to support critical harm reduction, treatment, housing and other services for people who use drugs or who are in recovery. Canada's overdose crisis requires collaboration from all levels of government, partners, stakeholders, people with lived and living experience, and organizations in communities across the country.

### Quotes

"It has never been more important to provide harm reduction and treatment services to people who use drugs. It is devastating to see that the pandemic has worsened the situation for Canadians struggling with substance use disorders in many parts of country, including Vancouver Island communities in British Columbia. Providing a safer alternative to street drugs will save lives and help people in Cowichan Valley access treatment and other supports."

*The Honourable Patty Hajdu  
Minister of Health*

"We know that providing safe prescription alternatives to the highly toxic and illegal drug supply is critical to stabilize people who are at great risk" said Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. "We're thrilled that this project will build on the work our government has been doing to separate people who use substances from the increasingly toxic street supply and give them the best chance to find their own pathway to healing and recovery."

*The Honourable Judy Darcy, B.C. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions*

“This medication option will provide a life-saving alternative to the contaminated drug supply that is driving our drug poisoning crisis. The recent increase in overdose deaths in communities within Island Health shows a clear need for better access to a safer drug supply.”

*Dr. Richard Stanwick, Chief Medical Health Officer, Island Health*

#### **Quick Facts**

- There is a growing number of programs now offering injectable opioid agonist treatment using opioids such as hydromorphone and diacetylmorphine, for patients where other treatment options have not worked.
- Early findings from Canadian evidence has found that using pharmaceutical-grade medications, such as hydromorphone, as an alternative to highly toxic street drugs for people at risk of overdose, can help to save lives and improve health outcomes. It can also help establish an entry to care and treatment for people with substance use disorder. Some medication-assisted treatment for severe opioid use disorder have been approved and are available in Canada for use by qualified healthcare professionals. These medications include injectable hydromorphone, methadone and buprenorphine products.
- This project is part of the federal investment of \$76.2 million announced in July 2019 for new measures to scale up key lifesaving measures, protect people from an illegal drug supply that contains toxic fentanyl, and address the growing methamphetamine use.
- Funding for this project is provided through Health Canada’s [Substance Use and Addictions Program](#) (SUAP). SUAP provides financial support to provinces, territories, non-governmental organizations and key stakeholders for programs and initiatives that aim to prevent, treat, and reduce harm of substance use issues.

#### **Related Links**

[Helping people who use substances during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Government of Canada invests in new measures to address the opioid crisis and emerging drug threats](#)

[Health Canada Toolkit: COVID-19 and substance use](#)

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#### **Contacts**

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## **Municipality of North Cowichan Official Community Plan Update**

If you reside in the municipality of North Cowichan or operate a business or organization you may want to engage in the upcoming revisions of the OCP. Stay tuned for information on how you can be involved in the coming weeks or go to the Municipality of North Cowichan website for more information.

The project is heading into the next phase – Visioning! Stay tuned for an official launch of the project website, and you will notice more frequent posts about this project on Facebook, Twitter, Email Blasts, Project Website and PlaceSpeak!

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## **BCMHSUS Patient and Family Partner Network For any Person with Lived and Living Experience of Mental Health, Substance Use and or Correctional Health Services in BC**

To help mobilize the collective power of peers and families to deliver safe, quality, and excellent care across all our services, BCMHSUS has created the **Patient and Family Partner Network**. Patient and Family Partners will participate in engagement opportunities to help design, plan and deliver services, programs, and policies at BCMHSUS.

There are a variety of opportunities to participate, including:

- Delivering training to new healthcare providers and leaders by sharing your story
- Interviewing new staff to ensure we are hiring the right people to serve patients and families
- Helping write and reviewing policies, resources and handbooks
- Participating on working groups and committees focused on quality and safety

Patient and Family Partners will also receive training, education, compensation, and/or support to build capacity and skills wherever possible.

**Any person with lived and living experience of mental health, substance use and/or correctional health services in BC** is invited to join the network to work with healthcare leaders and providers to design a better way forward, together.

If you are interested in becoming a Patient and Family Partner, contact [engage\\_bcmhsus@phsa.ca](mailto:engage_bcmhsus@phsa.ca) or call Katie Mai (Leader, Patient Experience and Community Engagement) at 604-202-7974 to connect with us and find out more.

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## **Some Information that may be helpful during the COVID 19 Crisis**

- **If you feel sick**, isolate yourself and use B.C.'s online [self-assessment tool](#).
- **BC Centre for Disease Control**  
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care>
- BC Housing provides great information <https://www.bchousing.org/COVID-19>
- **How to support your clients or residents**  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/vulnerable-populations-covid-19.html>
- **Self isolating in the home or co-living setting**  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-cases-contacts.html#app1>

- **How COVID-19 puts people who use drugs at greater risk**  
<https://leaderpost.com/diseases-and-conditions/coronavirus/how-covid-19-puts-people-who-use-drugs-at-greater-risk/wcm/66c9b32f-bc4f-4684-a8c1-b9d0a485aeed/>

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## **Health Matters Newsletter**

**Do you have a resource, event or information you would like to share?**

Send it to [cindylisecchn@shaw.ca](mailto:cindylisecchn@shaw.ca) and it will be included in the weekly newsletter