



Statement

August 14, 2020
For Immediate Release

Yesterday's announcement by the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions regarding a commitment to increase the number of treatment beds in B.C. for youth struggling with addictions is indeed good news for the health and well-being of our young people. Given the toxic drug supply that has contributed to a dramatic rise in overdose deaths across the province, this is a positive step forward.

The ongoing problem of harmful substance use by young people demands the provision of a full array of voluntary substance use treatment and harm reduction services for youth, including the residential treatment and withdrawal management services addressed in this announcement.

For several years, my Office has recommended the implementation of a wide range of voluntary, community-based services to address youth substance use, including two reports in 2016, one in 2018 and one in March of this year. All three reports called for the development and funding of a comprehensive system of substance use services capable of consistently meeting the needs of youth – including culturally appropriate, youth-specific and youth-friendly voluntary detox, intensive case management, day treatment and community residential treatment.

I understand and share deep concerns about the well-being of youth who use substances. In my work, I see the shocking impact of the toxic drug supply and overdoses on the lives of our young people every day.

I commend the government's actions to enhance the array of services available to young people with significant substance use concerns. I look forward to opportunities to further discuss the development of additional services to create a robust voluntary care system in B.C. and will be closely monitoring the implementation of these proposed new services through 2022/23.

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