

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de la Santé
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Dear colleague:

Communities throughout North America and beyond are struggling to fight an increasing number of opioid-related overdoses. Unfortunately, Ontario is not immune to this epidemic. As health care providers, we've all seen the very real, human cost of opioid misuse and addiction. We ask that you stand with us now in taking action to end this public health crisis.

Between 2010 and 2014, the number of prescription opioids legally dispensed in Canada climbed almost 24 percent. In a country of 35 million people, more than 21.7 million prescriptions were dispensed. Opioid misuse is the third leading cause of accidental death in Ontario.

Building on the significant work already underway, today Ontario is announcing a comprehensive strategy to address opioid misuse and addictions. The plan, based on the expert advice we received from Ontario's Methadone Treatment and Services Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Meldon Kahan, among other expert and stakeholder groups, will ensure Ontario health care providers have the tools, resources and information needed to provide the highest-quality care to patients.

We are working with pain management experts and investing in Ontario's Chronic Pain Network to ensure that health care providers have the resources and tools they have told us are required for treating pain safely and effectively. As health care providers, it is important to ensure patients get the treatment they need – manage pain without risking addiction to opioids and help patients who are already suffering from addiction. In order to achieve this, patient access to interdisciplinary pain management teams and evidence-informed harm reduction services is being improved

Dr. Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, will also be serving as Ontario's first Provincial Overdose Coordinator, and we are working closely to improve the surveillance of opiate overdoses and deaths and increase access to information concerning fatal and non-fatal opioid-related overdoses. Data from the Narcotics Monitoring System will be more readily available so you have up-to-date prescription records for your patients when making decisions concerning prescribing opioids.

Your voice and experience are key to the collective action required to turn the tide of this epidemic. We urge you to be an active participant in the upcoming consultations. We are engaging health care professionals and other service providers, patients, and individuals with lived experience to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and to ensure our actions are making a real difference.

Patients look to their health care providers for leadership and guidance. We hope that you will embrace this challenge and work with us as partners to stem this crisis for the good of all Ontarians. If we are going to reverse this trend, we must work together.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Hoskins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D Williams". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Dr. David Williams
Chief Medical Officer of Health