

February 24, 2022

Re: Invitation from the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply

Thank you for the invitation to present to the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I will have to decline this invitation on behalf of the organization I represent, the BC Centre on Substance Use.

I am concerned that your committee omits key participants and stakeholders from this conversation and, without their full participation in decision-making at the committee level, we are unclear if this process can provide recommendations that are informed by research or grounded in lived experience.

Any conversation about prescribed safer supply must include:

- People with lived experience with substance use, including the few who have been able to access prescribed safer supply as well as those in recovery from a substance use disorder
- Families impacted by substance use
- Clinicians with training in addiction medicine who are prescribing safer supply or have been involved in developing clinical practice guidance and/or programming
- Experts in criminal justice, not only law enforcement
- Experts in public health, specifically as it relates to drug policy in Canada

Given the worsening toxic drug crisis, new approaches to ending substance use harms and promoting recovery are urgently needed. Unfortunately, it appears the current committee composition and leadership is not set-up to consider the evolving evidence in this area and develop unbiased recommendations regarding the future of harm reduction and treatment services in Alberta.

Attached to this letter are summaries of recent peer-review publications from our research team examining safer supply. I will also ensure these are shared with your committee's 'evidence reviewer', Dr. Julian Somers.

I sincerely hope that this committee will carefully consider the important role of safer supply as one component to building an evidence-based substance use system of care to address the toxic drug crisis. In doing so, it is my hope that you will engage a truly balanced set of experts and, importantly, include appropriately trained addiction medicine specialists with experience prescribing safe supply, as well as people with lived and living experience.

Sincerely,



Cheyenne Johnson
Executive Director, BC Centre on Substance Use