

## For immediate release

### HealthCareCAN Board calls on Minister Philpott to appoint “Opioid Tsar”

Feb. 28, 2017 (Ottawa) - The opioid crisis remains centered in the West, but there are signs that the crisis has spread nationally. Last Friday, healthcare leaders from across Canada offered to join forces with the federal government, provincial governments, and municipalities to meet the crisis head on.

“HealthCareCAN applauds the recent announcement by Minister Philpott to provide \$10M to fight opioid overdoses at the epicentre of the crisis in British Columbia and looks forward to working with federal government on how best to leverage up the other \$65M to slow and eventually stop this wave of preventable deaths”, said Bill Tholl, HealthCareCAN’s President and CEO.

This public health crisis is unprecedented and will continue to work eastward unless there is a concerted national, indeed global effort. This is why HealthCareCAN is calling upon the federal minister to appoint a federal expert advisor or “Opioid Tsar” to help better understand the scope of this public health emergency and to assist the efforts already underway by Medical Officers of Health across the country. Hospitals, other healthcare facilities, ambulance services and home and community support services are all being stretched to the limit. The Minister’s Opioid Advisor would have a mandate to steward direct federal interventions in areas in the federal domain; to spear-head Canadian efforts as part of a global effort; and to coordinate with provincial Medical Officers of Health.

HealthCareCAN supports the focus on harm reduction programs in response to the crisis, many of which are administered by hospitals and healthcare institutions. Nevertheless, Canada needs a comprehensive plan that includes a commitment to reporting overdoses in real time to dedicate resources where they are most needed. “HealthCareCAN is working with Health Canada to co-host an extraordinary meeting of experts from across Canada this Friday. Together, we aim to determine how best to step up our efforts to report out on adverse events in Canadian hospitals and health authorities”, Tholl committed. This and other efforts to support the national action plan coming out of the Summit last November are also being conveyed by HealthCareCAN to Minister Philpott later this week, along with a request to meet.

*HealthCareCAN is the national voice of healthcare organizations and hospitals across Canada. We foster informed and continuous, results-oriented discovery and innovation across the continuum of healthcare. We act with others to enhance the health of the people of Canada; to build the capability for high quality care; and to help ensure value for money in publicly financed, healthcare programs.*

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