

Good afternoon EZMSA members:

Today I would like to focus this letter on my concern for two significant issues impacting our colleagues and patients.

### **Overdose Crisis**

Alberta was a leader in combating the growing overdose crisis with strong programs and physicians that support both “harm-reduction strategies” and a “recovery oriented” approach.

The Government of Alberta has decided to lay siege to harm-reduction and is hiding behind the term “recovery oriented” in order to decimate programs and services that took years to establish. Do not be fooled by what is truly happening to our community and our colleagues who have invested countless hours into programs that have contributed substantially to our health care system. This is an attack on our profession, colleagues and patients.

For the fiscally minded, the implications of insufficient community capacity for harm reduction include: 1) \$100s: for every added emergency visit; 2) \$1,000s: for every inpatient admission; 3) \$50,000: for every acute bacterial infection; 4) \$380,000: for every lifelong course of treatment for HIV; and 5) priceless: unnecessary human suffering.

As innovators and leaders we are not afraid of change. Perhaps some change is needed; however, it should come from physicians, health care providers, and experts in the field, together with patients. It should be patient centered and support a health care system that is already under enormous strain.

If this is allowed to continue, the costs, the time and the resources to recover these programs back again will far outweigh whatever this government thinks they will gain.

### **Racism and Injustice**

We know that racism and injustice are present and recent events remind us of that.

Our calling as physicians is to heal. We have a responsibility to the person in front of us but also to the wider community. According to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta’s Code of Ethics, one of the fundamental commitments of the medical professional to “Promote the well-being of communities and populations by striving to improve health outcomes and access to care, reduce health inequities and disparities in care, and promote social accountability.”

First, we need to educate ourselves about the true history of Canada. We need to listen to those who have suffered due to hate and discrimination. Second, we must acknowledge our part in the continued harms suffered by marginalized. We must acknowledge our biases and strive to continue to learn and do better. Finally, we must act. We must speak out and continue to be strong allies.

Everyone matters regardless of your beliefs, the color of your skin, your gender, your culture, your race, your age, and whom you choose to love.

Once again, as a profession and as people we need to stay united!

Regards,

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

Dr. Erika MacIntyre  
President 2021