

Canada's Opioid Crisis

Jean Bota, June 2019

I recently was asked to sit on a panel at our FCM (Federated Municipalities of Canada) conference in Quebec City, which spoke to “Responding to the Drug Crisis in our Communities”

Myself and four other panelists of various backgrounds and nation wide (Police/Community engagement Coordinator/ Co chair illicit Drug Task Force/ Executive Director of Intervention & Dependence) and a moderator spoke to a full room of municipal councillors and administration people on how each one of us is handling this issue or what it is doing to our communities. For myself, Opioid Addiction, along with other drugs, feeds our crime in rural Alberta and elsewhere in this country.

A little background: in 2016, our previous government recognized there was a problem due to the number of deaths which continued to grow and also the limited programs and resources, especially for our rural areas.

In May 2017, the Ministers Opioid Emergency Response was created which was led by Dr Elaine Hyshka (Associate Prof - Health Policy and Management). The commissioned report was presented to the previous government in July 2018, with 26 recommendations, in six strategical areas; Harm reduction (supervised consumption/overdose prevention sites, Treatment and Prevention, enforcement and supply control, collaboration, surveillance and analytics)

All recommendations were accepted by the previous Health minister.

One thing I learnt from my fellow panelists was there is definitely a crisis which is not going away any time soon and this is not rural or urban, it belongs to us all. I also found resources and programs severely lacking in the rural areas, across this country. We cannot police or shoot our way out of this, until we begin to address the “deeper social issues” which exist in our communities.

This was one topic we were all united on and pledged to keep in touch and push for more funding for our “deeper social issues” and also in many cases we don’t need to invent the wheel, someone across country may be doing exactly what we are proposing.

FOOTNOTE:

I realize this is not crime but it is crime related. You may find this a very interesting article produced by the Mount Royal University. To view copy and paste into your search bar at the top of the page.

<http://mapthesystem.sbs.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Mount-Royal-University-Roisin-Dillon-OpioidInfographicFinal.pdf>