



August 9, 2018

Dear friends of the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction,

In June, I was appointed as the volunteer Chair of the Board for the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA). As a result, I have been on an exciting journey learning more about CCSA, its talented staff and its ongoing contribution to policy development and knowledge sharing. But I have also learned that CCSA's path forward is uncertain.

I think we all know what a unique resource CCSA is. I have been meeting with the amazing researchers and policy experts at CCSA, whose work does so much to inform Canadian policy and decision making around drugs, including alcohol. Their reports and studies are recognized at all levels of government not only as authoritative but also as relevant to the issues facing service providers, first responders, law enforcement personnel and a range of professionals dealing with these issues.

In my professional life, I am the CEO of Pine River Institute. Pine River is a residential treatment and outdoor leadership centre for young people struggling with addictive behaviours. So, I know firsthand that the knowledge created and shared by CCSA is timely and important to the work we do.

Why is the path forward for CCSA uncertain? CCSA is one of eight organizations created to advise Health Canada and other departments and levels of government on different areas of health policy. Last year, the Minister of Health commissioned two consultants, Dr. Pierre-Gerlier Forest and Dr. Danielle Martin, to report on these Pan-Canadian Health Organizations (PCHOs). Their mandate was "to assess the role and impact of the current suite of PCHOs as a way to advance progress on pan-Canadian health-care priorities and federal objectives." Their findings were released in April in a report called [Fit for Purpose](#). This report calls into question the role and even the existence of CCSA going forward.

Recently, the Minister of Health established an [Implementation Steering Group \(ISG\)](#) to look into those findings and make recommendations to the Minister in the fall. The role of the ISG is "to develop a proposal and detailed implementation plan for reconfiguring and/or re-mandating the PCHO suite, building on the work of Drs. Forest and Martin". They are committed to consulting with the eight organizations affected, as well as key stakeholders.

The past few years have been marked by an accelerated debate and discussion around public policy initiatives in the area of substance use. Approaches to opioids, cannabis and alcohol have been front and centre on the public agenda. CCSA has been in the forefront of these fast-moving conversations. Now more than ever CCSA must focus on its valuable work with its partners and stakeholders as the PCHO review process moves forward. We will keep you, our partners, informed as the process unfolds.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact CCSA CEO Rita Notarandrea at (CEO@ccsa.ca) or myself (BoardChair@ccsa.ca).

Sincerely,

Vaughan Dowie, Chair,
Board of Directors, CCSA