



Letter to the Editor

October 03, 2020

Dear Albertans,

We are the Alberta Addiction Service Providers, representing detox, addiction treatment, harm reduction, peer supportive housing, and recovery operators across Alberta. We work on the front lines serving thousands of Albertans day-in and day-out in their recovery, seeing firsthand the hardship that addiction causes, as well as the daily grace that is watching a person recover from a hopeless state of mind and body.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen a lot of criticism of this government's recovery-oriented approach and it's time for the recovery advocates to speak up. We want Albertans to know that our member organization makes up the vast majority of the addiction care system, we are the front line and we have never felt more supported and encouraged by any government in our memory.

You do not often hear from us a group as we are usually too busy focused on saving lives and rebuilding families. While we focus on saving lives and rebuilding families through our work, we often do not have the time to advocate for ourselves and our clients. Our experience with the provincial government has been very positive and we want to thank them and express our gratitude for some things they have put in place.

Addiction can be hard to talk about, it is hard to live through, and it is hard to watch a friend or loved one lose themselves in it. Addiction is not a moral failing and it is not a death sentence. Addiction is a treatable chronic brain disease. Our sector comes from a place of hope for people across our continuum of services, recovery from addiction is real, attainable, and sustainable. The evidence of this is all around us.

Through the pandemic, we have seen reports of increased alcohol sales, increased calls for EMS related to substance use, and increased unintentional opioid poisonings. Unfortunately, at the onset of public health orders, treatment centres were unable to meet the need and as a result, our beds went empty. This meant that access to treatment and many other addiction services was greatly hampered—an experience felt by many other sectors across Canada.

Capacity has opened up once again, and we are seeing an increase in people reaching out for help to get into recovery. In fact, since this government has taken a recovery-oriented approach to addiction treatment, we have been able to treat more Albertans than ever before and have been able to reach people who likely would have never made into our system. Significant barriers have been removed with respect to access to treatment beds that has been greatly valued by the continuum of services that we represent.

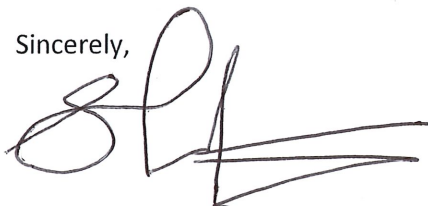
None of this would be possible without the government's thorough understanding of addiction and their proactive approach to building a recovery-based solution to the addiction crisis. The commitment to providing safe, effective, and publicly-funded treatment to Albertans has already helped countless people enter into recovery and would not be possible without the belief that recovery is possible regardless of who someone is or what they've been through.

As Albertans, we want and need a long-term practical solution to addiction. We want real change for the better. Supporting treatment and recovery services will ensure that Albertans who are struggling with addiction can access treatment, get into recovery, and live a healthy life giving back to the community. Supporting this as the ultimate goal should not be a controversial debate. It should not spark activism, hatred, or a divide amongst service providers who all ultimately share the same goal of supporting these vulnerable populations.

The shift in thinking in our province has meant that all Albertans now have the life-changing opportunity to recover from addiction we are building momentum towards a truly inclusive recovery-oriented continuum of care and finally moving towards a real solution for addiction recovery. This is a strategy of which we are extremely proud.

We celebrate the approach our province is taking as it opens the door for more Albertans who have taken the steps towards recovery over the past few months. This system is yours. Change will not happen over night, but if we stay the course that we are on now it will happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a series of horizontal strokes.

Stacey Petersen – Co Chair

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, featuring a large, circular loop followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Kim Turgeon – Co – Chair

The Alberta Addiction Service Providers

www.albertaadddictionserviceproviders.org