

All Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addictions Meeting Minutes

Date: July 10, 2024

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Attendees:

Committee Members: John Hogan, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Paul Pike, Joedy Wall, Lela Evans

Officials: John McGrath, Niki Legge, Tara Power, Stephanie Wold, David Coffin

1. Minutes approved from June 26, 2024.
2. Presentation – Dr. Todd Young provided an overview of Main Street Medical Clinic services, specifically the OAMT Program, which began to help address the gap in addiction services in rural communities. It currently includes 9 clinics across the province, as well as a telemedicine option, with a current wait time of 24-48 hours to be seen. Methadone and Suboxone (Suboxone is cleaner, more portable, allows more independence), were discussed as treatments, as well as Sublocade (an injectable Suboxone), which requires treatment only once a month, eliminating daily visits to pharmacies.

Areas of improvement included: the willingness of pharmacies to prescribe and dispense Opioid Use Disorder treatments, such as methadone and suboxone; improved legislative access through coverage from Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Plan; continued increase in access through virtual services and telemedicine; and better care to those incarcerated in correctional institutions.

Challenges included: the gap between release from correctional institutions and reintegration into the community (often released on Fridays and without prescriptions); youth services to help prevent substance use as early intervention (youth 13-15); treating substance use across the life span; and the wait time for treatment centres (i.e., rehab) such as Humberwood and The Grace Centre.

Areas for improvement included: curriculum on substance use for school age children in the education system; increased mental health and addictions curriculum in MUN medical school; a physician's responsibility in the prescription of opioids (NL has the most opioid prescriptions per capita in Canada); improved time to access treatment; and, a need for a virtual and in-person Emergency Department with physicians comfortable to screen patients for substance use disorders, as well as prescribe for and treat.

Discussion included: the increase in cocaine use, for which rehab is the only treatment option; the advantages of instant urine tests (can take up to 3 weeks through a laboratory), their expanded use (drug use, compliance, monitoring) and potential cost savings; as well as concerns with access to treatment in rural areas such as Labrador.

3. Action Items

- Secretariat to provide a copy of the presentation to members.