

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

Date: May 22, 2024

Time: 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Committee Members: Tom Osborne, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Paul Pike, Fred Hutton, Joedy Wall, Jim McKenna, and Lela Evans

Officials: John McGrath, Niki Legge, Maggie O'Toole

1. Minutes approved from May 14, 2024.
2. Committee discussed how best to engage those with lived experience, including the EngageNL questionnaire, which is soon to be launched.
3. Presentation – Gerard Yetman with the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador provided an overview of the organization and the Safe Work Access Program (SWAP) program. The program reaches about 5,000-7,000 people. The mail out system has been successful and reaches approximately 100 rural communities. There has been an increase in clients between ages of 16-30. This age group has minimal access to drug or sex education. Discussion and questions included whether there should be safe injection sites in the province, stigma associated with drug use; potential or a need for a harm reduction centre in downtown St. John's; the population served by the organization; and need for supportive living options (sober living) after attending rehabilitation.

Biggest improvements identified since implementation of Towards Recovery included: continuation of SWAP across the province, including in Labrador; establishment of Hubs across the provinces; treatment centres across the province; and establishment of a centre of excellence.

Biggest improvements needed going forward included: need for education in 7-12 school system for drug, sex education and mental health, e.g., the “Take Care Down There” education program; additional rehabilitation beds in province and the need for longer than 26 days in rehabilitation; review of Atlantic Canada research on why people are leaving rehabilitation; need for transitional living options once discharged from rehabilitation; need for culturally appropriate rehabilitation services; and need for evaluation of the services.

4. Action Items
 - Deferred Alberta Access 24/7 presentation to next meeting.