



July 8, 2018

The Honourable Randy Delorey
Minister of Health, Government of Nova Scotia
Department of Health and Wellness
Barrington Tower, 1894 Barrington Street
P.O. Box 488
Halifax, NS B3J 2R8

Health.Minister@novascotia.ca

Cc: The Honourable Mark Furey
Minister of Justice
Cc: CEO of NSHA Janet Knox
Cc: CEO, IWK Health Centre

JUSTMIN@novascotia.ca
Janet.Knox@nshealth.ca
Krista.jangaard@iwk.nshealth.ca

Re: Funding Hepatitis C treatment for all infected prisoners in Nova Scotia

Dear Minister Delorey:

Women's Wellness Within: An Organization Serving Criminalized Women and Infection Prevention and Control Canada (IPAC Canada) each wrote to you in March 2018 to ask you to immediately fund Hepatitis C treatment for all infected prisoners in Nova Scotia provincial carceral facilities. WWW provided comment for a CBC News Radio and Web article about this failure to provide necessary care: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/hep-c-nova-scotia-inmates-treatment-1.4568429>.

Neither organization has received a response to our letters.

Earlier this month, the *Canadian Association for the Study of the Liver* issued new national guidelines that recommend all Canadians born between 1945 and 1975 be screened for Hep C. The authors explained change in the guideline was based on the easy availability of effective curative treatment for Hep C.

Hep C is a progressive, life-limiting, infectious, *curable* disease. Incarcerated individuals experience extraordinarily high rates of Hep C (research has found between 15-30% of prisoners are infected). The rate among women is higher. Women are the fastest growing population in our prisons. Trauma, poverty, homelessness, mental illness and addiction put women at increased risk of survival crime and at increased risk of disease transmission.



The right to this therapy among those incarcerated is clearly protected by existing law. Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “the right to life, liberty, and security of the person,” asserts the right to seek health care, and Section 12, “protection from cruel and unusual punishment”, protects inmates from state withholding of life-saving therapy. Section 28 of the Nova Scotia *Corrections Act* requires accommodation of prisoners due to illness, disability or injury. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the “Nelson Mandela Rules”), stipulate state responsibility for prisoner health, and that incarcerated individuals have the right to the same standards of health care as are available in the community. Not offering Hep C treatment violates of provincial, federal and international law.

It is a moral imperative that prisoners be offered Hep C therapy. It is also sound Public Health practice: as with all infectious disease, reducing disease burden in the population reduces the risk of infection for us all. I urge you to immediately take the necessary steps to make this therapy available to all Nova Scotians, especially those most in need.

Sincerely,

Martha Paynter MSc MDE RN
Chair of the Board, Women’s Wellness Within

Molly Blake RN BN MHS CIC
President, Infection Prevention and Control Canada

Contact information:

Women’s Wellness Within
PO Box 34007 Scotia Square
Halifax, NS B3J 3S1

womenswellnesswithin@gmail.com

Infection Prevention and Control Canada
P.O. Box 46125 RPO Westdale
Winnipeg MB R3R 3S3

president@ipac-canada.org