

Dr. Perry Kendall
Provincial Health Officer
Office of the Provincial Health Officer
4th Floor, 1515 Blanshard Street
Victoria BC V8W 3C8

September 26, 2014

Re: Congratulations on your important HIV, Stigma and Society: Tackling a Complex Epidemic and Renewing HIV Prevention for Gay and Bisexual Men in British Columbia report

Dear Dr. Kendall,

We are writing to congratulate you on the *HIV, Stigma and Society: Tackling a Complex Epidemic and Renewing HIV Prevention for Gay and Bisexual Men in British Columbia* report.

This is a very significant report in that it highlights the importance of HIV prevention in gay and bisexual men, a population that is disproportionately infected and affected by HIV and one that has not received a comparable amount of resources and consideration in services, research, and media attention in British Columbia.

PAN believes that the relatively stable trends in HIV incidence in gay and bisexual men are concerning. You make an important point in the report for us to consider – BC will not further reduce its HIV epidemic without a substantial reduction in new HIV infections in gay and bisexual men. Given this, we fully support the comprehensive set of recommendations that are laid out in the report.

We are also enthusiastic about the conceptual approaches highlighted in the report – including the understanding that in order to address health issues, such as HIV, among gay and bisexual men we need to consider multi-level approaches. It is important to understand that gay and bisexual men's experience of health is more broad than indicated by the mainstream paradigm of behavioral and biological risk (as do all people who may become infected with HIV). Health is impacted by societal and structural level drivers, such as stigma and discrimination, and community and relationship level drivers, such as the density of sexual networks. We are pleased that you have taken this holistic approach to thinking about vulnerability and HIV prevention opportunities for gay and bisexual men. It begins to shift the paradigm to one that is more supportive and inclusive of the whole person.

We also appreciate the linkages this report makes with already existing health plans in the province, such as: *From Hope to Health: Towards an AIDS-Free Generation* and *Seek and Treat for Optional Prevention of HIV/AIDS (STOP HIV/AIDS)*; *Healthy Minds, Healthy People: A Ten-Year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance Use in British Columbia*; and *Promote, Protect, Prevent: Our Health Begins Here – BC's Guiding Framework for Public Health*. Parallel and complementary plans that align

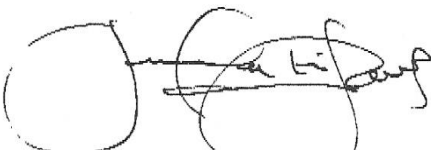
government actions provide community-based organizations with guidance for conducting more effective planning, implementation and evaluation on behalf of their members, clients, and patients. Along these lines, we wholeheartedly support the recommendation in the report to develop a comprehensive provincial health strategy for gay and bisexual men and will assist in any way we can to support this work moving forward.

PAN continues to build a strong agenda to support a broader gay men's health agenda and we have and will continue to take the following steps to move these recommendations forward:

- PAN's Community-Based Research Program is fostering a growing research agenda in this area and has worked to create strong linkages with partners and stakeholders regionally and from across the country;
- PAN's Skills-Building and Targeted Workforce Development Program is providing trainings, conferences, e-learning modules, and webinars to staff and key volunteers of member organizations in this area;
- PAN will continue to work alongside PAN member and allied organizations such as the BC Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, to influence the development of prosecutorial guidelines in BC relating to HIV non-disclosure;
- PAN will continue to distribute the report and promote the recommendations through our regional, provincial and national networks, as well as use the document to help guide our own work with men in gay and bisexual communities; and
- PAN will continue to supporting our partners in ensuring the prominence of community's and people with lived experiences' voices at tables relating to this work.

We thank you for a thoughtful and useful framework and would be happy to speak to you further about how PAN and its member organizations' can contribute to moving this important work forward.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Evin Jones", written over a horizontal line.

Jennifer Evin Jones
Executive Director

CC. Honourable Christy Clarke, Premier of British Columbia
Honourable Terry Lake, Minister of Health, British Columbia
Dr. Evan Adams, Deputy Provincial Health Officer, British Columbia
Warren O'Briain, Executive Director, Communicable Disease Prevention, Harm Reduction & Mental Health Promotion, BC Ministry of Health
Dr. Gina Ogilvie, Director, Clinical Prevention Services, BC Centre for Disease Control

Dr. Mark Gilbert, former Physician Epidemiologist, Clinical Prevention Services, BC Centre for Disease Control

Rick Marchand, Managing Director, Community-Based Research Centre

Greg Oudman, Executive Director, Health Initiative for Men

Dr. Julio Montaner, Director, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

Travis Salway Hottes, former Epidemiologist, HIV & STI Prevention and Control, BC Centre for Disease Control

Stephen Smith, Director, Mental Health Promotion & Mental Illness Prevention, Communicable Disease Prevention, Harm Reduction & Mental Health Promotion, BC Ministry of Health

Chris Buchner, Regional Director of Prevention, Vancouver Coastal Health

Michael Spowart, Regional Director for the Public Health Agency of Canada, Western Region