

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PAIN BC AND CANADIAN PAIN SOCIETY APPLAUD CANADIAN PAIN TASK FORCE REPORT CALLING FOR NATIONAL ACTION ON CHRONIC PAIN**

**July 14, 2019 – Vancouver, BC** – Pain BC and the Canadian Pain Society welcome the first report by the Canadian Pain Task Force, released to the public today by Health Canada. The [report](#) assesses the current state of chronic pain care, education and research in Canada and highlights the profound impact of chronic pain on Canadians. It notes the disparities in health care available to people with pain across the country and calls for policy coordination and resources to address existing gaps and inequities, and to improve care for all Canadians with pain.

**Highlights of the report include:**

- There is a global consensus that chronic pain is a significant chronic disease in its own right and as such, needs concerted attention. This is not reflected in the current state in Canada.
- Care for chronic pain is largely dependent on where people live and what type of insurance coverage they have.
- People living with chronic pain need better access to a range of treatment services beyond medication, including psychological support, physical therapies, integrated healthcare services, and others.
- There is a clear deficit in education of health professionals in the causes, types, underlying mechanisms, and effects of pain, as well as how best to treat it.
- Efforts to reduce the number of opioid-related overdose deaths in Canada have had significant consequences on chronic pain patients, including increased stigma and reduced access to treatment. For some patients, it has also resulted in inappropriate prescribing practices such as abrupt stoppage of opioids or tapering without consideration of the risks associated with withdrawal or the medical needs of patients.
- Data and evidence need to be improved to make more informed decisions on individual treatment, health system change, and policy.

The full report can be read at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada/public-engagement/external-advisory-bodies/canadian-pain-task-force/report-2019.html>

The [Canadian Pain Task Force](#) was formed by the Government of Canada in April 2019 to assess the current state of pain in Canada and to recommend an improved approach to addressing pain in our country. The Task Force brings together eight experts, including those who have lived experience with persistent pain, researchers and health care providers. The Task Force is informed by an External Advisory Panel made up of 15 additional experts with lived experience and/or backgrounds in research, education, clinical care.

“This report makes Health Canada aware of what Canadians with pain have known for too long: that pain care is largely not accessible, many health care providers lack the knowledge and skills to manage pain and breakthroughs in research are hampered by lack of funding. We hope this report lays the foundation for a national pain strategy that will improve the lives of Canadians who live with pain,” said Maria Hudspith, co-chair of the Canadian Pain Task Force and Executive Director of Pain BC.

“As an anesthesiologist specializing in the care of children living with chronic pain, I am completely passionate about preventing and treating this costly and often devastating disease that affects 7 million Canadians including children. I am optimistic that this report lays a foundation for action, which is urgently required to build capacity in education and research, and reduce disparities in care,” said Professor Fiona Campbell, co-chair of the Canadian Pain Task Force and President of the Canadian Pain Society.

“I have lived with daily pain for over twenty-five years. Most of the doctors I have seen throughout this time have little understanding of how to treat it, leaving me to manage the pain and medications on my own. The federal government making pain treatment a priority with the Task Force and this - the first of three reports - gives me hope that I will someday be able to access more treatments allowing me to participate fully with my family and society,” said Linda Wilhelm, member of the Canadian Pain Task Force, President of the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance, and person with pain.

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#### About Pain BC

Pain BC is a collaborative registered charity comprised of people in pain, health care providers, researchers, and other supporters. Founded in 2008, our mission is to improve the lives of people in pain through empowerment, education, and innovation. Partnerships are the cornerstone of our work – we collaborate with health authorities, regulatory bodies, governments, other NGOs, health professional associations, and businesses to achieve our mission.

#### About the Canadian Pain Society

The Canadian Pain Society is a society of scientists, health professionals, and patient partners who have a vested interest in pain research and management. As a chapter of the International Association for the Study of Pain, the Canadian Pain Society supports the treatment of pain as a basic human right and is currently advocating for a Canadian National Pain Strategy.

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