

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Government's announcement on opioids ?flawed and disappointing?

It's hard to not miss the press coverage of opioid-related overdoses and deaths for many months now.

Sadly, there is an opioid crisis in Canada and no region of Canada is necessarily insulated from it. It's a real concern for all Canadians and there have been growing calls for action.

In November, the current Liberal government announced the steps it will take to address the crisis. While the government appears to be supporting its commitment to lower the number of opioid-related overdoses and deaths in Canada, there are valid concerns with the changes and projects it is undertaking to address the ongoing crisis.

The opioid crisis is very real. According to the most recent statistics released by the Public Health Agency of Canada in September, more than 2,800 Canadians died in opioid-related deaths in 2016. It's also expected that the number will reach at least 3,000 Canadians for 2017. This is a considerable increase and one that has Canadians calling for action.

The current Liberal government announced Nov. 15 they will support new treatment options for drug addicts, including giving them prescription opioids or pharmaceutical grade heroin, backing quality testing of street drugs, and helping provinces set up overdose prevention sites in emergencies.

We, as the Conservative Official Opposition, take drug addiction very seriously. Canada is currently in the middle of an unprecedented opioid epidemic. We also recognize the harm caused by this epidemic. These drugs can tear families apart, lead to criminal behaviour and destroy lives. We are seeing young professionals, blue collar workers and teenagers dying at alarming rates from experimenting with recreational drugs.

The Liberal plan does nothing to prevent drugs from reaching our streets. We, the Conservative Official Opposition, want to prevent people from becoming addicted and we support the treatment of addicts. However, we do not think it is a good use of taxpayer money to pay for drugs to keep addicts addicted. It is unfortunate the current Liberal government is providing \$526 million to legalize marijuana while only committing \$7.8 million to the fight against opioids.

The current Liberal government's approach to fighting the opioid epidemic is flawed and disappointing. A stronger approach with a focus on prevention is needed and one that invests more in treatment to help addicts break their addiction to drugs. We will continue to stand up for Canadians in our country's ongoing battle against the opioid crisis.

