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CANADIAN CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO OPIOID OVERDOSE CRISIS

Canada's governments must address rising number of overdose deaths

August 31, 2016 — On International Overdose Awareness Day, over 70 Canadian civil society organizations have endorsed an urgent call to action addressed to all levels of government, urging politicians to immediately implement five recommendations that will serve as initial steps of a nationwide crisis response to reduce opioid overdose fatalities and injuries across the country.

For months, Canadians have been hearing about the rising numbers of deaths resulting from opioid overdose. In Ontario, a person dies from an opioid-related death every 14 hours. Since 2000, more than 5, 000 people have died in Ontario as a result of an opioid overdose, an increase of 463%. In British Columbia – the only province that has declared a public health emergency – there were 433 apparent illicit drug overdose deaths from January to July 2016. As federal Health Minister Jane Philpott recently observed, B.C. and Alberta are seeing more people die from opioid misuse than from automobile accidents.

It is time to address this national crisis. Canada must take action to end the unnecessary staggering numbers of overdose deaths. Representing the views of a broad cross-section of Canadian civil society, these 70 groups are calling on the Prime Minister and the federal, provincial and territorial health and justice ministers to immediately implement this five-point action plan. To read the five-point action plan and view the full list of signatories, see <http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/action-life/>.

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