

March 21, 2021

Attention:

Richard Cannings, MP Richard.Cannings@parl.gc.ca

Premier John Horgan premier@gov.bc.ca

Dan Ashton, MLA Dan.Ashton.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Karla Kozakevich, RDOS Chair kkozakevich@rdos.bc.ca

Susan Brown, CEO IHA susan.brownVP@interiorhealth.ca

City of Penticton Mayor John Vassilaki & Council council@penticton.ca

City of Summerland Mayor Tony Boot tboot@summerland.ca

Minister of Health BC Adrian Dix HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Ministry of Health BC Opposition Critic Renee Merrifield renee.merrifield@bcliberals.com

Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions BC Shiela Malcolmson MMHA.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions BC Official Opposition Critic Trevor Halford

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Re: Pathways Addiction Resource Center

I am writing this letter for consideration regarding funding being provided for Pathways Addiction Resource Center that serves Penticton and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen.

I have been an ongoing client there first as a teenager and then off and on as needed over the years including currently for support as a recovered person. My family has also seen counsellors at Pathways and these appointments have greatly helped keep our family together.

In 2014 my boyfriend Keven was killed tragically on his motorbike and Pathways helped me through this devastation. The staff there know me, I have a relationship with them, I could share everything with them and didn't have to start the story over with a stranger. In July of 2018, tragedy struck again when I woke up to a text message that my boyfriend Tim had overdosed the night before and died. Again, Pathways was there for me.

Having a long history of substance abuse myself I can tell you I honestly don't know if I would have maintained my years of sobriety that day had I not been able to get an appointment with Steve King a few hours after receiving the news Tim had died. I left that appointment feeling much better. I went home to my little girl who was 1 years old at the time and was able to be her mom and sit with my grief rather than avoid it by any means. I attended a program at Pathways to help me process my grief and maintain my sobriety and it helped so much. It is not the only program I've participated in.

Pathways has always been that one place where I could always be myself. The first time I went there I was 14, I am 38 now.

A healer is someone who holds space for someone and helps them find their own inner healer within. I have found my inner healer within thanks to Steve King.

The staff at Pathways are the biggest blessing this community has. I have lived in this town most of my life and I am sure everyone here knows someone who goes, or has gone to Pathways and has positive things to say about their experience.

It breaks my heart to see comments by Susan Brown, President and CEO of Interior Health. She has obviously not done her research. IHA is good in so many parts of providing services for basic health, but they have failed miserably in the provision of services for mental health and addiction. If IHA feels the need to expand their involvement, perhaps they should open a full treatment centre in Penticton where those attending Pathways can be referred to for detox rather than having to go on a long wait list for Kelowna, Vancouver or the Island. Look what is happening with mental health. You cannot go see anyone at the hospital in Penticton. If you don't have private insurance coverage, you are forced into a Zoom group meeting with 20 other people. This cannot and will never replace what Pathways does. It will only result in more problems, costing more money and possibly more lives.

Where will clients like Doctors and Nurses go that work for IHA? RCMP?, Fire Departments? There is a huge confidentiality risk given what has been proposed. Again, it shows that the IHA CEO has little understanding of the real grassroots work that happens at Pathways 24/7. I can also tell you people don't "fall through the cracks" unless they chose too. I have missed appointments in the many years I have gone there and they call you the minute you are late on all the numbers you have on file to make sure you are okay. At that point you can come in late, do an appointment over the phone, or reschedule.

While ultimately people have to want to overcome their addictions Pathways has given me the tools I needed to choose life and be an excellent mom, present in all avenues of my life and family. I have found my happiness within! Pathways saved my life. I am so grateful for all that they do.

I hope with all my heart we can Save Pathways.

Thank you,

Mandy Burton

cc: Pathways Penticton