

NEWS RELEASE

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BC's Provincial Health Officer to Address Addiction and the Opioid Crisis

CMHA Conference Tackles Impact of Addiction on the Workplace

Vancouver (February 16, 2017) – The man at the centre of BC's fentanyl crisis, Provincial Health officer Dr. Perry Kendall, will report on the crisis and the province's plan to address it to the Bottom Line Conference on Workplace Mental Health, the annual conference sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA).

Dr. Kendall's address will open the second day of the 14th edition of the two-day conference, which runs Feb. 21-22 at The Vancouver Marriott Pinnacle Downtown Hotel.

Dr. Kendall will then join a panel of experts to discuss the impact of alcohol and drug addiction in the workplace.

Everybody knows that fentanyl is a killer, leading to 914 overdose deaths in BC in 2016. What isn't so well known is the impact of alcohol and drug addiction in the workplace. In addition to the human cost to employees and their families, there is an enormous productivity costs Canada \$11.8 billion a year; 16 per cent of benefits costs are due to workplace disability and absence.¹

The panel will look at addiction and its impact on workplace mental health through the perspective of science and the law. In addition to Dr. Kendall, the panel will include Tonie Beharrell, in-house legal counsel to the Health Sciences Association of British Columbia, Dr. Paul Farnan, Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Family Practice at UBC and Dan Reist, Assistant Director with the Centre of Addictions Research of BC at the University of Victoria.

As organizations try to grapple with the impact of substance use on the workplace, there's another challenge on the horizon they will have to get ready for: the Trudeau government's promise to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. On Day 1, to help delegates get an idea about what to expect, Eric Costen, the Director General of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Secretariat, will talk about the government's commitment to legalize, regulate and restrict the sale of cannabis in Canada.

Of course, addiction is more than drugs and alcohol. Shopping, sex, food and gambling can take over lives just as mercilessly. Angus Reid, the former offensive line stalwart for the BC Lions CFL team for 13 seasons, will speak to the conference on Day 2, and tell the powerful story about his struggle to overcome an addiction to compulsive gambling.

¹ (n.d.). *Start the Conversation: Problematic Substance Use and the Workplace*. Mental Health Commission of Canada, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and The Conference Board of Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.ceapaonline.com/PSUW%20Brochure.pdf>

For more information on the conference program, please see www.bottomlineconference.ca

*Mental Health Commission of Canada/Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse/The Conference Board of Canada

Media are invited to attend this year's conference and there will be a media table on site. If possible, please register in advance by contacting CMHA's Lorna Allen: lorna.allen@cmha.bc.ca.

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About the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

CMHA is Canada's most established mental health charity and the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health. CMHA helps people access the resources they need to maintain and improve mental health, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness. Each year in BC alone, CMHA serves more than 100,000 people all across the province. For mental health and addiction information and resources visit www.cmha.ca.

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