

To the Attorney General for Canada and the Minister of Health for Canada,

The Government of Canada recognizes that an opioid crisis is killing thousands of Canadians each year and that aggressive marketing of opioid products is one important cause of the crisis.

We urge the Government of Canada to (1) launch a criminal investigation into the marketing of opioids in Canada and (2) directly compensate victims of the opioid crisis with funds recovered from opioid manufacturers with new legislation.

While Purdue has already pleaded guilty to illegally marketing opioids in the United States, no opioid manufacturer has been prosecuted in Canada. The same long-acting opioids that fuelled the opioid crisis in the United States are marketed in Canada and Canadian prescribing rates for these medications accelerated with the Canadian opioid-related death rate. It would be very surprising if Canada was spared the inappropriate marketing practices that admittedly took place in the United States.

The Canadian victims of the opioid crisis have been forced to seek justice on their own through a civil suit filed against Purdue Pharma. The proposed settlement is much smaller than what the victims sought. The Government of Canada can divert funds from opioid manufacturers who continue to profit from the crisis to the victims of the crisis. Similar legislation is in place for tobacco companies and the victims of their inappropriate marketing practices.

While other actions are necessary to end the opioid crisis and to alleviate suffering, and Canadian Governments are seeking to improve care for some people affected by the crisis, the two proposed actions can help promote justice and help turn the tide in the opioid crisis that is expected to kill several thousand more Canadians this year.

We would be pleased to discuss this important issue.

Sincerely,

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Janice Graham, Professor, Dalhousie University

Matthew Herder, Associate Professor, Dalhousie University

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