



30 Ways to Eradicate Drugs, Addiction & Crime

GUARDIANS FOR RECOVERY CORPORATION

+1 709 770-0677

PO Box 21178, St. John's, NL, Canada A1A 5B2

Tina@GuardiansOfRecovery.Foundation

GuardiansOfRecovery.Foundation

Registered Charity - 7829673500001RR0001

CRA HST Number: 782967350 RT0001

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*“Life doesn’t get easier, better,
fairer or happier.*

*Instead, we get wiser, stronger,
and more resilient.*

*And in this rich pattern of life
and all its experiences,
we come to answer life’s most
profound questions*

*Who am I as a person of
contribution?
and
How will I make a difference?*

-Tina Olivero



RALLY FOR CHANGE

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Ben's Benefit urges action for addiction care

By Kaymie White
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

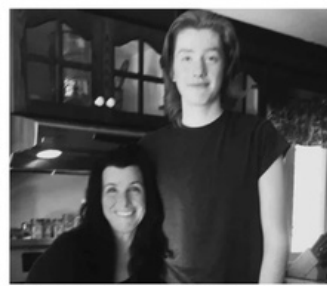
ST. JOHN'S — Tina Oliviero is turning her family's tragedy into something meaningful to help the thousands of families who struggle with similar circumstances. After a seven-year battle with his mental health and substance abuse, Ben, Oliviero's son, passed away.

"Ben was a beautiful, wise soul. He was six foot six. We called him Gentle Giant, and he was very old soul with a purpose far beyond what I had ever envisioned for his life, and while Ben's death has been devastating, it's become a huge catalyst for change," said Oliviero. "Speaking to the hearts of many people across the province with mental health and addiction, it's almost like we popped a bubble and made the conversation of mental health and addictions one that is truthful and

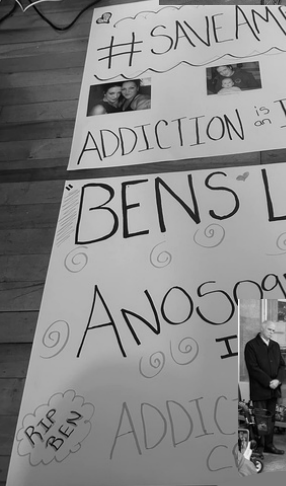
that Ben didn't have, trying to make change for the loopholes in the system and trying to be there for other parents who are going through this tragedy. Because I don't think until you live through it, you have no idea what it's like to watch your child slowly die in front of your eyes and not be able to do anything about it. It was frustrating, infuriating, sad, stressful, took a toll on my body. It was unbelievable. The story of what parents have to go through has still to be told."

Ben's struggles lasted for almost a decade.

"We have mental health issues in our family, bipolar. So the moment that he smoked weed, it unlocked almost like a bipolar (effect) in Ben's brain. And he had no cause and effect, and he had no ability to see that he was even sick, which is called anosognosia, and that's prevalent in 40 per cent of people with



Above: Tina Oliviero with her son, Ben, in happier times. Below: Tina Oliviero works to help other families going through similar situations. — Submitted photos



30 SOLUTIONS

WE ALL NEED A LITTLE MORE FUN AND HAPPY TIMES

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Drugs, Addiction, Overdose & Crime - IT HAS TO STOP NOW

For far too long, Canada has watched the drug and addiction crisis spiral out of control while governments at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels continue funding policies that, in my opinion, have failed the very people they claim to help.

As someone with lived experience in addiction, recovery, mental illness, and frontline advocacy, I have watched families bury their children, parents lose hope, neighbourhoods deteriorate, organized crime flourish, and vulnerable people abandoned on our streets. We don't have an addiction crisis because recovery is impossible.

We have an addiction crisis because, in my view, governments have spent years normalizing addiction instead of making recovery, mental wellness, prevention, and public safety the priorities.

Recovery is possible. But recovery requires leadership, accountability, treatment, and the courage to change course.

Canada needs a coordinated national strategy that recognizes something governments have too often forgotten: addiction is not a lifestyle. Mental illness is not a lifestyle. And people struggling with either deserve the opportunity to get well.

Here are 30 things the Government of Canada can do right now, working with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous governments, law enforcement, health-care providers, families, and communities.

1. Stop the Drugs

Strengthen federal enforcement against drug trafficking, organized crime, fentanyl trafficking, and the importation of illegal drugs into Canada.

The Canada Border Services Agency, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, local police services, and international partners must have the resources, technology, intelligence, and personnel necessary to intercept illegal drugs before they reach Canadian communities.

2. Review High-Potency Cannabis

Today's cannabis products can contain extremely high levels of THC. Canada should continue reviewing the evidence surrounding high-potency cannabis, particularly its relationship to psychosis, addiction, youth mental health, and other psychiatric outcomes.

The federal government should consider stronger warning labels, better public education, improved monitoring of high-potency products, and additional protections for young people and other vulnerable populations.

3. Stop Calling Harm Production "Harm Reduction"

Guardians of Recovery believes taxpayers should not be funding programs that provide drugs and/or drug-use supplies but rather ensure people have meaningful access to treatment, recovery, mental-health care, and a pathway out of addiction. Compassion should never mean giving up on recovery. Harm reduction can save lives in the immediate term, but it should exist within a broader system that aggressively promotes prevention, treatment, recovery, and long-term wellness. Harm reduction without a path to recovery is like building a house on quicksand.

4. Keep Drugs Out of Jail

The federal government should strengthen security, screening, intelligence, and drug-detection technology in federal correctional facilities.

Correctional institutions should not become environments where illegal drugs can freely circulate.

5. Put Recovery First

Recovery—not lifelong dependence—should be a central goal of Canada's addiction strategy. Medication-assisted treatment, including medications such as methadone and buprenorphine, can save lives and is an important evidence-based treatment option for many people. At the same time, people who want to pursue abstinence and eventually taper medication should have access to qualified medical supervision, counselling, detoxification, residential treatment, recovery housing, and long-term support.

No single treatment pathway should be imposed on everyone.

People need choices—and recovery must be one of those choices.

6. Treat Addiction and Psychosis Like Medical Emergencies

No one experiencing severe addiction, overdose, or substance-related psychosis should be left suffering on the streets.

Canada needs greater access to emergency addiction medicine, psychiatric care, crisis stabilization, detoxification, hospitals, mobile crisis teams, and rapid-access treatment.

When someone is experiencing a serious brain or mental-health crisis, we should respond as though their health and life matter.

7. End Open Drug Use

Governments must enforce existing laws against public drug use and public intoxication while ensuring that people encountered in crisis are offered meaningful pathways into treatment.

Public spaces should be safe for children, families, seniors, workers, and everyone else.

8. Demand Accountability

Public institutions—including governments, police services, health authorities, correctional systems, and publicly funded organizations—must be transparent and accountable.

When policies fail, governments must be willing to acknowledge those failures, investigate them independently, and change course.

9. Stop Funding Programs That Produce No Results

Taxpayer dollars should support programs that demonstrate measurable improvements in outcomes such as treatment engagement, sustained recovery, overdose prevention, reduced emergency-room use, reduced homelessness, reduced crime, and improved quality of life.

Programs should not receive permanent funding simply because they have existed for a long time. r mechanisms for families to advocate when a loved one is experiencing severe mental illness, addiction, or a crisis that places them or others at significant risk.

10. Publish the Results

Every publicly funded addiction and mental-health program should publish annual results showing:

- **How much money was spent.**
- **How many people were served.**
- **How many entered treatment.**
- **How many completed treatment.**
- **How many transitioned into recovery housing or employment.**
- **What happened to participants over time.**
- **What measurable outcomes were achieved.**

Canadians deserve to know what their tax dollars are accomplishing.

11. Target Organized Crime

Increase specialized federal enforcement against fentanyl traffickers, pill producers, gangs, organized criminal networks, money laundering operations, and other groups profiting from addiction. Canada must make trafficking highly risky and highly unprofitable.

12. Secure Our Borders

Canada's borders must be adequately protected against the importation of illegal drugs. The federal government should work with the Canada Border Services Agency, RCMP, international partners, ports, airports, marine authorities, and local law enforcement to intercept illicit drugs before they reach Canadian communities.

13. Shut Down Open-Air Drug Markets

Communities should not be forced to live beside open drug markets and persistent criminal activity.

Governments should support police foot patrols, cameras where appropriate and lawful, community safety initiatives, targeted enforcement, and rapid responses to public drug trafficking.

At the same time, enforcement should be paired with treatment pathways for people struggling with addiction.

14. Make Public Spaces Safe Again

Families deserve parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, transit systems, libraries, downtowns, and public gathering places free from open drug activity. Canada should not accept public spaces becoming environments where people are afraid to walk, work, shop, raise children, or visit. Public safety is not an optional extra. It is a basic responsibility of government.

15. Replace Enabling With Recovery

Every publicly funded addiction service should provide a clear pathway toward treatment, recovery, housing, employment, and long-term stability. Emergency shelters should be safe environments with clear expectations around violence, trafficking, and drug use, while also providing access to treatment and recovery supports. Canada needs more sober and recovery-oriented housing for people who are ready to rebuild their lives.

16. Protect the Vulnerable

Increase penalties and enforcement against people who prey upon individuals living with addiction, mental illness, homelessness, or other vulnerabilities.

Criminal organizations routinely exploit vulnerable people to transport, sell, store, or obtain drugs. Young men and women with addictions or mental-health challenges should never become disposable tools for organized crime.

17. Fight Human Trafficking and Exploitation

Strengthen investigations into human trafficking, sexual exploitation, organized crime, and drug trafficking networks.

People living with addiction and mental illness can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Canada must protect victims while aggressively pursuing the people who profit from their exploitation.

18. Fund Frontline Services—and Remove Barriers to Recovery

Canada and the provinces should invest more in treatment beds, detoxification, psychiatrists, psychologists, addiction physicians, recovery coaches, social workers, peer-support workers, and sober living environments.

We need fewer administrative barriers and more people delivering care.

Government employees and publicly funded organizations should be evaluated on whether their policies improve patient outcomes—not simply whether they administer programs.

19. Demand Measurable Outcomes

If a publicly funded program cannot demonstrate meaningful results, it should be reviewed.

Funding should be redirected when evidence shows that another approach is producing better outcomes. Compassion and accountability are not opposites.

20. Hold Government Accountable

Canada should establish independent evaluations of national and provincial addiction strategies. These evaluations should examine treatment outcomes, overdose deaths, public safety, homelessness, mental-health outcomes, health-care utilization, organized crime, and taxpayer spending. Government should be willing to follow the evidence—even when the evidence requires changing policies that were previously defended.

21. Offer Treatment on Demand

No one asking for help should be told to wait weeks or months while their addiction gets worse.

Canada should work with provinces and territories to expand access to rapid-access detoxification, residential and outpatient treatment, psychiatric services, recovery housing, and aftercare. When someone finally says, "I want help," the system needs to be ready.

22. End Treatment Wait Lists

People motivated to recover should not lose their opportunity because a treatment bed isn't available. Canada needs a coordinated national approach to capacity planning so governments know where treatment beds, detox spaces, psychiatric services, and recovery housing are needed. Every life is worth saving.

23. Expand Psychiatric Care

Increase access to psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, addiction medicine specialists, and specialized mental-health services. People experiencing addiction alongside serious mental illness need integrated care—not a system that sends them from one door to another.

24. Improve Brain Health Assessment

Invest in comprehensive psychiatric, psychological, neurological, and addiction assessments so people receive accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatment. There are people suffering from addiction, people suffering from mental illness, and people suffering from both. Each situation can require a different protocol of care.

Without proper assessment, we risk leaving people untreated on the streets, cycling through emergency departments, correctional facilities, shelters, and police interactions. We would never tell a person with a serious neurological disease to simply go back onto the street. Why would we accept that standard for people experiencing serious brain and mental-health disorders?

25. Eliminate Drugs in Correctional Facilities

Continue strengthening correctional security and screening to reduce the flow of illegal drugs into prisons. The federal government should also expand evidence-based treatment and recovery programs inside correctional facilities so that incarceration can become an opportunity for rehabilitation rather than another environment in which addiction flourishes.

26. Stop Releasing High-Risk Violent Offenders Without Appropriate Safeguards

Public safety matters. Federal corrections and the justice system must ensure that decisions concerning high-risk offenders properly consider risks to victims, families, and communities. Where legally appropriate, release should be accompanied by meaningful supervision, treatment, housing, mental-health supports, and other safeguards necessary to reduce the risk of reoffending.

27. Stop Wasting Taxpayer Dollars

Canada has federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and community organizations working in overlapping areas of mental health, addiction, housing, homelessness, and public safety. Governments should identify duplication, eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, and redirect resources toward services that produce measurable improvements in people's lives. More money does not automatically mean better outcomes.

28. Follow the Evidence

Canadian drug policy should be based on evidence, measurable outcomes, public safety, prevention, treatment, mental wellness, and continuous evaluation. No ideology—whether from the political left or right—should be allowed to replace evidence. If something works, expand it. If something does not work, change it.

29. Listen to Families

Families are often the first people to recognize when someone is deteriorating.

Governments should review policies to ensure families can participate in care whenever legally appropriate, while respecting privacy rights and the autonomy of patients.

There must also be better mechanisms for families to advocate when a loved one is experiencing severe mental illness, addiction, or a crisis that places them or others at significant risk.

Families should not be treated as outsiders when they are often the people who know the individual best.

30. Make Recovery the Priority

Stop accepting failure as inevitable. Taxpayers deserve accountability. Families deserve hope.

Communities deserve safety. And every person living with addiction deserves the opportunity to recover—not simply survive. Mental wellness and recovery are possible. Canada Stands at a Crossroads. Canada can continue down the same path, hoping that more funding and more of the same programs will eventually produce different results. Or we can be bold enough to change course.

We can build a national recovery strategy that brings federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, Indigenous, health-care, law-enforcement, and community partners together around common goals. We can prevent addiction before it starts. We can treat mental illness before it becomes a crisis. We can intervene earlier. We can make treatment available when people ask for it. We can protect vulnerable people from exploitation. We can fight the organized criminal networks profiting from addiction. We can make our streets and public spaces safer. And we can make recovery an expectation rather than an exception. Canada has spent billions of dollars responding to addiction, homelessness, mental illness, and the overdose crisis. We now need to be willing to ask the hardest question: What are Canadians actually getting for that investment?

If a program works, we should support it. If it saves lives, improves health, reduces crime, or helps people achieve long-term recovery, we should expand it. But if a policy is not producing the outcomes Canadians need, governments must have the courage to change it. We cannot keep doing something simply because we have always done it.

At Guardians of Recovery, we believe every life is worth fighting for. We believe in preventing addiction before it starts. We believe in treating mental illness before it becomes a crisis. We believe in helping people recover—not simply survive. We believe no one should ever be written off. This is about saving lives. This is about protecting our children. This is about restoring safe communities. This is about giving every person trapped by addiction the opportunity to reclaim their future. Those who fight their way into recovery are among the strongest, most resilient people I have ever met.

Canada needs more of that strength. More of that hope. More treatment. More recovery. More success stories. Recovery is real. Recovery is possible. Mental wellness must become a national priority.

We must do what is hard so that life can become easier. We must not avoid difficult decisions at the expense of our children and future generations.

Now is the time for governments across Canada to act boldly by implementing meaningful recovery solutions, mental health treatment, public safety, and organized crime reform.

Canada has the opportunity to become a national leader in recovery instead of remaining known for some of the country's most difficult mental-health and addiction challenges.

**To the Government of Canada, and to governments across every province and territory:
You have an opportunity to lead with courage.**

Make recovery and mental wellness the foundation of Canada's response.

If we get this right, we won't just reduce addiction.

We'll reduce crime.

We'll weaken organized criminal networks.

We'll ease pressure on hospitals, first responders, and police.

We'll strengthen families.

We'll improve housing stability.

We'll restore confidence in our communities.

We'll make our cities and towns safer.

We'll support tourism and local economies.

And most importantly, we'll restore hope.

History remembers governments that solve the biggest challenges of their time.

This is that challenge.

Let's be the country that proves mental wellness matters.

Because without healthy brains, we do not have healthy bodies, healthy lives, healthy families, healthy communities, or healthy outcomes.

Mental wellness and recovery work.

Let us never stop believing that every life is worth saving.

And let us never accept that Canada is destined to live with this crisis forever.

To every church and non-profit organization, it's time to band together for the good of all. We are more alike than anything else, and it's our common goal of transformation, restoration, recovery, and well-being that ties us together. We all want to live in peace and harmony. We all want to live united and connected. We all want to live in cultures of love and caring. We are friends. We are neighbours. It's time we acted that way.

We are all children of this world. God help us to rise, come together and do what's right. To be courageous and to change the trajectory of our future.

Amen.

Letter from Founder and CEO Tina Olivero, Guardians of Recovery

Dear Community Heroes,

Three years ago, I lost my son Ben to a lethal fentanyl overdose. As hard as I fought, I could not stop it. That moment broke me.

But it also ignited something fierce inside me—a conviction that this could not be the end for anyone else's child.

From that heartbreak, **Guardians of Recovery** was born with a clear mission: to build a world where recovery is not an option, but the first choice, and where every person battling addiction has a real, safe path forward.

Our journey has been difficult, but filled with hope. We began as a grassroots group—volunteers and donors who refused to accept the system's failures. We didn't just talk about change; we acted. We lobbied, did media interviews, created a magazine, launched a podcast, built a strong social media presence, and hosted awareness events like **Ben's Benefit**. We became a national non-profit, achieved Charity status, and this year opened our **first recovery-first sober home**—a safe place where people can heal, rebuild, and move forward free from addiction. We are saving lives.

Our vision continues to grow. We are working toward a **network of sober shelters and long-term sober living homes**—places where individuals can step off the streets, out of trap houses and low-barrier shelters, and into structured, supportive environments that put recovery first. These are not just houses, but communities built on accountability, mentorship, and life skills that create lasting change.

Along the way, we've built a passionate team: a **board of community leaders and recovery experts**, dedicated volunteers, and donors who believe in changing the trajectory of addiction before another family is lost. Every person who joins us becomes part of a movement—one that is rewriting the story of addiction, crime, and despair.

Here's what we are advocating for and building: On-demand detox and rehab access with no waiting
Recovery-first sober shelters, Long-term sober living homes, Peer mentorship, and life skills programs, Community advocacy and policy change.

Imagine a community where neighborhoods hold hope instead of despair, where recovery replaces addiction, and where every life gets a second chance. That's the world we are building at **Guardians of Recovery**—and it's a world you can help create.

When you join us, you are more than a donor or volunteer. You are a **Guardian**—part of a story where the ending is not tragedy, but triumph. You help save lives, reduce strain on healthcare and justice systems, and restore hope to families who feel lost.

We cannot do this alone. Every volunteer, every donation, and every shared story brings us closer to transforming the addiction crisis into a culture of recovery. Together, we can write a new chapter—one where recovery comes first, and communities thrive.

We chose the name **Guardians of Recovery** because a Guardian **protects and empowers life**. Guardians stand against addiction, create recovery spaces, foster hope, and save lives. It will take a nation of **Guardians** to change the trajectory of this deadly epidemic.

So I leave you with one question...
Are you a Guardian of Recovery, too?

Tina Olivero
Founder & CEO



Guardians of Recovery, Tina@GuardiansOfRecovery.Foundation
www.GuardiansOfRecovery.foundation. +1 709-770-0677





**Remembering 56,000
Canadians who have died
of overdose, including
BEN OLIVERO
August 16, 2002 - July 29, 2023
who sparked a
RECOVERY REVOLUTION**

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