

Noah Irvine
16 Westhill Road
Guelph, ON
N1H 7P6
noahirv@gmail.com

October 25, 2017

Her Majesty The Queen
Buckingham Palace
London SW1A 1AA

Madam,

My name is Noah Irvine, a Grade 12 student in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. I am writing to you about a personal event that has truly affected myself and my family. When I was just five years old I lost my mother to suicide and then in 2015 my father died of a prescription drug overdose. In spite of those tragedies, I have turned my pain into action.

In the last two months I have become an advocate for change. National media have pick up my story from coast to coast. International media, including BBC-TV, have carried my advocacy further than I could imagine. It all started with a classroom assignment.

After reading a letter I had written for her as a writing project my teacher, Jill Goodreau, encouraged me to send the letter to federal and provincial members of parliament. I mailed to all 336 sitting MPs in February. Six months, later only 40 had replied. I took my frustration with the low response to the media.

On August 23, the first story was written and put on the Guelph Today website. That small, local, online paper received 12,000 shares in around a week. Then Global TV national news contacted me. As a result of that story, I was given a 90 minute meeting with the Prime Minister's Office to discuss the failings of Canada's mental health and addictions services. After all of that attention, more requests for interviews came in and more MPs started responding to my letter. I was quickly going viral.

On September 13, I had the privilege of going to Queen's Park in Toronto and speaking for Bill 149, an act to create the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction in our province. After speaking to the media in a press conference, I was honoured for my actions in bring awareness to the truly devastating affects of mental health and addictions issues in the Province of Ontario and Canada. The legislature rose in applause and acknowledgment of my advocacy and in respect for the loss of my parents.

On the September 22, federal Minister of Health Ginette Petitpas Taylor invited me to meet her to discuss my idea for a secretariat for mental health and addictions within the Prime Minister's Office and how that could lead to better services for thousand of vulnerable and suffering Canadians. I felt truly honoured to have that meeting. For the first time, it seemed my government was listening to my concerns and those of many Canadians across the country. I felt for the first time that my parents did not die for nothing. With the meeting coming to a close, I left the minister with one final statement: "In the 12 years that my mother has been gone,

60,000 Canadians have killed themselves. They all had names. One of those names is Lesley Mary Susan Irvine. She was just 24 and had a five-year-old son.” Then I stated: “If you have a statistic on the deaths by overdose — prescription and nonprescription — they all have names and families that loved them. One name that I knew and loved was Kent Allan Martin, my dad. He died along with my mum due to the inaction of governments.” This statement truly affected Ms Petitpas Taylor. She was deeply moved and commented that she would do something to save the lives of Canadians.

I was also privileged that all this attention allowed me to receive a phone call from Prime Minister, which lasted 20 minutes. I again highlighted the fact that Canada needs to step up and do more for mental health and addiction services. I also reaffirmed the need for a secretariat in his office. He said the idea was interesting worthy of more thought. He also told me to continue advocating for change.

I am writing to you so that you understand what your people are doing across the Commonwealth. I wanted you to hear my story, and understand that with my story I am committed to creating a better Canada for all and a better Commonwealth for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and service.

I have the honour to be, Madam, Your Majesty's humble and obedient servant.

Noah Irvine