

Gov. Charlie Baker to include Canada in opioid crisis approach

Gov. Charlie Baker will propose ways to work with eastern Canadian provinces to stop opioid trafficking as part of the 40th annual Conferences of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, which opened last night with a State House reception.

Baker spokesman Brendan Moss said the governor wants to include Canada in the Compact to Fight Opioid Addiction that was ratified in July by the National Governors Association, in which Baker serves as health and human services chair.

Moss said in a statement the compact calls for a “coordinated approach between states to combat the opioid epidemic, including collaboration with law enforcement to end opioid trafficking,” and, said Baker, “looks forward to sharing our proposals with our Canadian partners.”

Premiers from New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Quebec and the six New England governors are expected to attend the conference, which runs through today at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center.

The compact includes pledges to work with health care providers to set prescribing guidelines, integrate state systems that monitor opioid prescriptions, and create or strengthen addiction treatment for nonviolent drug offenders.

Like Massachusetts, Canada has been dealing with its own soaring opioid overdose rate in recent years, including increased prevalence of fentanyl, an especially potent opioid often manufactured in clandestine labs in North America and China.

At last year’s conference in Newfoundland, the six New England governors recommended the FDA require labeling changes to more prominently warn patients and prescribers of addiction and overdose risks.

The Boston conference also will focus on the “need for a diverse energy portfolio” in the region and the “importance of competitive business environments,” according to Baker’s office.

Union protesters who oppose Baker’s proposed cuts to the MBTA janitorial contract budget heckled Baker during the conference’s red-carpet opening ceremony on the State House steps, chanting “Charlie Baker, don’t make a mess!” At least two protesters were dressed as cockroaches.

By: Jack Encarnacao