

House of Commons

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Charlie Angus

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The Honourable Patty Hajdu
Minister of Health
70 Colombine Driveway,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9
Email: hcminister.ministresc@canada.ca

September 16, 2020

Re: Need to Implement National Suicide Prevention Action Plan

Dear Minister Hajdu,

Canadians have come through one of the most stressful and uncertain times in memory. But we know that the COVID crisis is not over, and this coming winter could be a very hard time. The stress of this unprecedented medical and economic crisis will have a considerable impact on the mental health of many Canadians. Therefore, I am writing to you to convey a sense of urgency on your government's need to live up to its promise to implement Motion 174, the National Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

In 2019 the Parliament of Canada voted its support to move ahead with Motion 174 - a national suicide prevention action plan. You, yourself, voted for the action plan. And yet, since then, the government has only responded with sporadic efforts. Given the crisis of the times, we need to work together to fulfill the promise made to Canadians.

Workers are facing the worst economic conditions in decades. Thousands of workers have lost their jobs in the past six months; many of them will never return. Simultaneously, many small and medium-sized business owners have had to shut down or are on the brink. The research is definitive – economic uncertainty leads to often dramatically increased suicide rates. When we factor in the isolation and social uncertainty brought on by COVID, the possibility that this will be a very dark winter for many Canadians is clear.

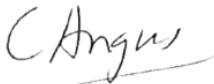
Indigenous communities have undertaken extraordinary measures to limit the spread of COVID into their communities. But this has necessitated closing communities off and limiting all travel. The social and health pressures from this isolation have hugely elevated the social pressures.

Therefore, the implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Action Plan is needed now more than ever. These tools and resources are required to help Indigenous communities, mental health workers, minority communities, businesses, unions, teachers, parents, and so many others in their work to combat suicide and improve the mental health of Canadians.

While I applaud the investments, the government has put forward so far, they don't yet match the commitment made in voting for M-174. The government has failed to live up to key deliverables that were laid out in the motion regarding the need to gather evidence and provide an annual report to parliament. We urge you to work with us and ensure that this action plan is put in place this winter to maintain strong mental health support and grassroots suicide prevention initiatives in this time of unprecedented uncertainty.

This issue has united all members of parliament to come together to commit to making a difference. Now, during this pandemic, it is more important than ever to recommit to the mental health of Canadians and to this valuable project and start its creation. I look forward to hearing from you on the timeline for living up to the vote taken by parliament in May of 2019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "C Angus", with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Charlie Angus, Member of Parliament
Timmins-James Bay