

**House of Commons**

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**Charlie Angus**

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The Honourable Marc Miller  
Minister of Indigenous Services  
10 Wellington St., 28<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4

September 24, 2020

**Re: Fire Keeper Patrol (Mobile Street Outreach) Program – Mushkegowuk Tribal Council**

Dear Minister Miller,

I wanted to draw your attention to this important program that aims to help tackle the double impact of COVID, and the Opioid Crisis is having in Northern Ontario superficially in Timmins. The Opioid epidemic has hit the area hard, with the effects of drug use and crime increasing exponentially. To provide the help these people need, the Mushkegowuk Council and Wabun Tribal Council has proposed a Mobile Street Outreach Program (Fire Keeper Patrol) to help provide service and aid in Timmins.

The Mushkegowuk Tribal Council is the senior representative organization for seven First Nations in the Western James Bay and Hudson's Bay and Northeastern Ontario. These include Attawapiskat First Nation, Taykwa Tagamou First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Fort Albany First Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Chapleau Cree First Nation, and the Missanabie Cree First Nation.

Many from these First Nations that move off-reserve end up in Timmins. Unfortunately, this means that some of them end up homeless and/or suffer from mental health and addiction issues. In fact, homelessness in Timmins is characterized as largely affecting indigenous people. Currently, indigenous people make up 68% of the homeless population in Timmins, a higher than national average homeless rate. At the same time, there are few supports for them in the

community, which has led to increased overdoses, crime, and other social and economic issues that the community is not set up to handle.

That is why the Fire Keeper Patrol program is so important for the City of Timmins as it will provide a service that is currently lacking in the community. This program would focus on helping indigenous people with culturally appropriate services to get them the help and resources they require, and hopefully on track to a healthy and secure life.

The project will partner to develop and manage the services. It will collaborate with the City of Timmins, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Porcupine Health Unit, Timmins Native Friendship Centre, Timmins Living Space, Red Cross, and other organizations within Timmins to develop 24/7/365 street outreach services for people struggling with mental health issues and addictions.

Funding will go to:

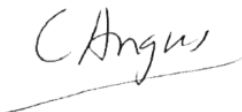
1. Creation of a Street Outreach Team to serve our Mushkegowuk and Wabun members and other indigenous people living in the city of Timmins by hiring and training indigenous people with lived experience and who are fluent in their indigenous language;
2. To improve and increase culturally safe harm reduction/mental health services for Mushkegowuk/Wabun members and other indigenous people living in Timmins;
3. Building relationships with indigenous people struggling with addictions in a non-judgmental and supportive manner;
4. To work in harmony with our partners to develop/coordinate a 24/7/365 street outreach response to reflect the diverse needs of our Mushkegowuk & Wabun members and other indigenous people living in Timmins;
5. To have our members transition into leading a healthy lifestyle and to become established in their daily life.

Currently, the City of Timmins is working hard to deal with the double impact of the opioid and COVID crises. The Fire Keeper Patrol will go a long way to help deal with the social and health ramification this community is dealing with.

While it will not fix the entire problem, it will provide a crucial and culturally appropriate care model for these individuals who require help.

Minister Miller, I would sincerely ask to provide any aid you can for this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C Angus". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Charlie Angus, Member of Parliament  
Timmins-James Bay

Cc: Valerie Gideon, Senior Assistant Deputy, [valerie.gideon@canada.ca](mailto:valerie.gideon@canada.ca)