



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Jenica Atwin

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
FREDERICTON

26 May 2020

**The Honourable Minister Patty Hajdu
Minister of Health**

**cc. The Honourable Minister Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance**

**House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0A6**

Re: Direct Investments in Community Mental Health Services

Dear Minister Hajdu,

First I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the leadership that you have demonstrated to Canadians over the last months. No one could have predicted what your first year as Health minister would entail.

One of the greatest testaments to your leadership has been your adherence to the advice of Dr. Tam and other public health officials as the pandemic has unfolded. I am writing to you today because we are observing a consensus from mental health professionals, warning of an echo-pandemic of mental illness to come.

As you know, COVID-19 has been unlike anything we've experienced, exposing Canadians of all walks of life to new anxieties, robbing them of the comfort of family and friends, leaving them financially insecure. It is hitting people hard. Last Friday a psychologist in Nova Scotia shared that he had seen more suicide attempts in the last three months than in the previous five years. I am convinced that we need to act now.

In a press release dated April 15th, the Canadian Mental Health Association warned of the echo-pandemic and called for immediate investment in the scale-up of cost-effective, evidence-based community mental health programs and supports. I recognize some funding has been made available already, to Kids Help Phone for example. But I am asking you and your government to go further. The provinces need significant dedicated mental health funding, as do municipalities. Community organizations need direct, base-line funding. And this funding needs to start flowing now so these services can have any hope of scaling up to meet the demands of the pending echo-pandemic.

I hope to see your government continue the leadership it has shown on health files through the pandemic and make a significant mental health related announcement soon.

Sincerely,

CONFEDERATION BUILDING, SUITE 318
229 WELLINGTON AVE
OTTAWA, ON
K1A 0A6
JENICA.ATWIN@PARLGC.CA