



August 11, 2020

The Honourable Patricia Hajdu, Minister of Health
Office of the Minister of Health

Subject: Expansion of the Wellness Together Canada Initiative

Dear Honourable Minister,

We are pleased to inform you that, beginning July 13, 2020, members of the House of Commons and Senate have come together to resume meetings of the Cross-Party Mental Health Caucus in the 43rd Parliament. In the coming months, this non-partisan group will examine mental health programs and standards of care in Canada and consult with mental health organizations with the intention of providing informed, evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the mental health outcomes of people across Canada.

First and foremost, the caucus would like to acknowledge the important work that the Government of Canada has done so far, including the recent announcement of a dedicated \$500 million to address the immediate needs of Canadians faced with challenges related to mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness. As the full health, social, and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic become clear over time, we expect to see an increase in the level of mental health issues reported by Canadians. As mental health needs increase, we expect that local mental health organizations will be key to supporting our communities and these organizations will need the government's help. We, the Cross-Party Mental Health Caucus, support the commitment to provide dedicated, meaningful, and transparent funding to support mental health organizations in serving our communities.

We would also like to advise you that caucus members, in a meeting held on July 24th of 2020, passed the decision to support the Wellness Together Canada initiative. We call on the Government of Canada to consider the following recommendations to further improve the initiative.

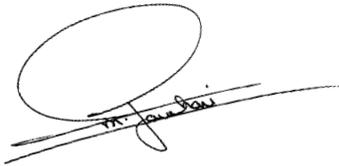
The Cross-Party Mental Health Caucus proposes:

1. That the Government of Canada consider developing a simplified, interactive app or digital platform that can direct individual users to relevant mental health programs and organizations located right in their riding or municipality;
2. That, in developing the online component of the Wellness Together Canada initiative, the Government of Canada consider using successful, user-focused models like the one used on Innovation Canada (innovation.ised-isde.canada.ca) and other interactive online tools in order to create an engaging, accessible user experience;

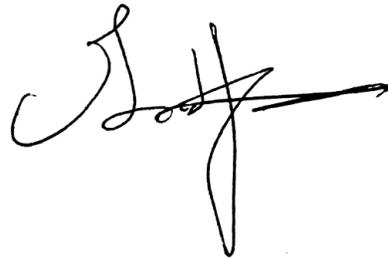
3. That the Covid-19 Wellness Together Canada initiative be made into a permanent program and that this program be re-conceptualized to serve Canadians at the community level, thereby empowering local organizations to reach vulnerable Canadians more effectively;
4. That the Government of Canada emulate the funding and application structure of riding-specific programs like Canada Summer Jobs, which allow for open and transparent applications and informed input from the representative of each riding;
5. That the services and information provided through Wellness Together Canada be widely promoted to social media and other interactive platforms, particularly ahead of Mental Health Awareness Week in October 2020; and
6. That funding to local, community-based mental health organizations continue to be prioritized during this public health emergency, given the extraordinary health, social, and economic impacts experienced by Canadians as a result of Covid-19.

We would like to confirm our support for the expansion of the Covid-19 Wellness Together Canada initiative and wish to see the Government of Canada collaborate with all levels of government to develop and administer an effective, user-focused mental health strategy at the national, provincial, territorial, and municipal level.

Sincerely,



Majid Jowhari, Member of Parliament,
Richmond Hill



Gord Johns, Member of Parliament,
Courtenay-Alberni



Jenica Atwin, Member of Parliament,
Fredericton



The Honourable Senator Marilou McPhedran