

House of Commons

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Charlie Angus

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The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor
Minister of Health
70 Colombine Driveway, Floor 16, Mail Stop 0916C
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

July 10, 2018

Re: Canada Suicide Prevention Service

Dear Minister Petitpas Taylor,

I am very concerned to learn that the Canada Suicide Prevention Service, Canada's first nationwide suicide prevention helpline, has suspended text and chat services on July 7 due to a lack of funding. This is the first national helpline of its kind. That their effective text and chat services have had to shut down sends a bad signal. This government promised to take seriously mental health seriously. To lose such a valuable service due to avoidable funding gaps shows otherwise.

The CSPS came online in November of last year thanks to funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, and since then, has received over 13,000 contacts. Of those, nearly 8,000 were through the CSPS' now-shuttered text and chat services.

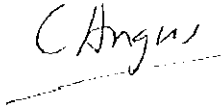
Suicide prevention is critical to save families and communities avoidable tragedies and heartbreaks, and, as an added benefit, upstream services like the CSPS helpline can help save our healthcare system resources it needs for other categories of acute care and treatment.

During their first eight months in operation, the CSPS has delivered services far beyond what they anticipated at launch, and while the voice helpline continues to operate for now, CSPS users have clearly indicated that they prefer the text and chat services.

I urge you to increase the funding provided to CSPS by the Public Health Agency as soon as possible – it is not adequate to their needs and is spaced out over too long a timeframe.

The CSPA is the only national suicide prevention service operating in multiple media, and there are no equivalent services that will be able to pick up the slack should the CSPA have to suspend operations entirely.

Sincerely,

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

Charlie Angus, MP
Timmins—James Bay

cc. Canada Suicide Prevention Service
Canadian Medical Association
Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention