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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

*Hon. Rona Ambrose
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6*

March 25th 2015

RE: Fentanyl Abuse and Overdoses

Minister Ambrose,

There are many issues that cross-party lines, where the Canadian public expects us to work together and I truly believe that this is one of them. I have seen the devastating effects of fentanyl abuse and overdose on individuals, families, and communities in my riding. There is an urgent need for a public conversation. I am also asking that you look into whether Health Canada can require a bar code or serial number be put on each individual patch so that police can have the tools to track them.

The fentanyl patch is an important pain killer for people suffering from serious illnesses, because, it can be many times more powerful than morphine and heroine. However, for that same reason the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse said that it has been receiving reports across the country of dangerous fatal and non-fatal overdoses linked to fentanyl.

The US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) recently issued a nationwide alert about the dangers of fentanyl, where they said *"Drug incidents and overdoses related to fentanyl are occurring at an alarming rate throughout the United States and represent a significant threat to public health and safety."*

The RCMP recently announced that there have been more than 100 deaths linked to fentanyl abuse in Alberta alone. The BC Coroners service has said that fentanyl was detected in about a quarter of 330 overdose deaths last year compared with five percent in 2012. Sudbury police say that fentanyl patches are now the most seized drug in their investigations. And it's not just the statistics; I have unfortunately witnessed these devastating tragedies first hand.

I recently held a working group meeting of key health care workers, addiction experts and regional police in the Porcupine region on the dangers of the increasing street use of this "heroin on steroids." The working group is setting out a series of strategies to raise awareness

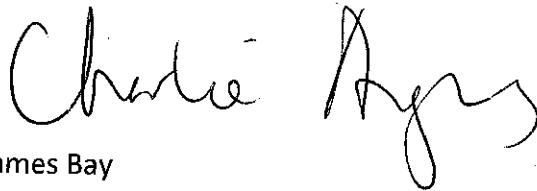
and find ways to limit this drug getting on the street. For example several communities in my region have started patch for patch programs at their pharmacies.

The federal government has a role in the development of these strategies. I am writing to ask that Health Canada urgently look into initiating a public conversation on the dangers of fentanyl. Furthermore, I ask that Health Canada look into the possible development of serial identification codes for each individual patch so that they can be tracked.

Canadians are too often turned off by Ottawa's negative and cynical politics. It is incumbent on us to find a way to work together. I look forward to hearing how can partner on the urgent need to mitigate the dangers of fentanyl and do our best to limit these tragedies.

Sincerely,

Charlie Angus
MP Timmins-James Bay

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Angus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.