Letter to minister/politician

***Send this letter to a minister or politician. Either use your own signature at the bottom or have the chair of your local group sign it. You may need to adapt it to make it relevant to your local situation.***

*[Insert letterhead and minister/politician contact information here]*

Dear [Minister] *last name here*

July 28 is World Hepatitis Day. Every 30 seconds – even during the current COVID-19 pandemic – a person dies from a hepatitis related illness. Canada will join with groups around the world to raise public awareness of the life-threatening liver diseases hepatitis B and C. One in 12 people worldwide are infected with one or the other – 600,000 of them in Canada. Many don't even know it. They may have no obvious symptoms until serious liver damage has occurred. These are chronic, lifelong viral infections that can affect anyone from any walk of life.

Hepatitis is incorrectly stigmatized as an IV drug-users’ disease, a sexually transmitted disease and/or an alcoholic's disease, and few people realize that it takes only blood-to-blood transmission to pass it on -- something as simple as sharing personal hygiene items such as razors and toothbrushes, or by using non-sterile equipment for tattoos, body piercing, haircutting, injection drugs or medical procedures.

Hepatitis A and B may be prevented by vaccines but there is no vaccine for hepatitis C. The earlier hepatitis C is detected the sooner it can be treated and the greater the likelihood of recovery. The most likely outcome without treatment is cirrhosis of the liver, which can be fatal in the absence of a liver transplant.

Hepatitis C is the most common chronic blood-borne virus in North America and the primary reason for liver transplants in Canada and the United States. Two thirds of patients on the transplant waiting list will die before a suitable liver becomes available. The disease is almost five times more prevalent than HIV in North America.

The focus of the World Hepatitis Day campaign is to raise public awareness. We urge you to mark World Hepatitis Day on July 28 by making a statement in your legislature and alerting the general public to the risk factors involved in hepatitis B and C and the need for testing if they think they might have been infected.

*[Insert signature here]*

For more information, visit:

www.hepatitiscanada.com