

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Building Back the Same

OTTAWA, ON (April 19, 2021) – At the onset of the pandemic, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) commended the Government of Canada for pulling together immediate emergency economic supports. However, as this pandemic continues, the inadequacy of our social safety net is painfully exposed. Consequently, CASW is deeply disappointed that the 2021 Federal Budget lacks the vision, urgency, and innovation required to truly shift Canada towards social and economic equality.

"This budget is largely a re-packaging of previous budget announcements and falls dramatically short of a comprehensive fiscal plan to both survive the pandemic and thrive after the immediate threat subsides," states CASW President Joan Davis-Whelan. "Not only that, but Canada's recovery must also be grounded in Reconciliation and meaningfully address systemic racism and structural gaps so blatantly exposed by COVID-19."

While many important pieces are already in place in Canada such as the National Housing Strategy, the Canada Child Benefit, Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, the anti-poverty strategy, and investments in childcare, Canada remains in crisis: the Government of Canada must do more to address the compounding effects of the pandemic and flatten the curve of inequality through bold investments.

"If we are unwilling to put a ceiling on wealth, then we must be willing to place a stable economic floor -- in the form of a Basic Income -- upon which all people can build their lives" says Davis-Whelan.

Additionally, the shadow pandemics of the opioid crisis, housing crisis, increases of domestic violence and deepening systemic racism will only continue to worsen when coupled with an unambitious plan to address economic and mental health parity. Budget 2021 does not provide a sustainable path to permanently addressing any of these concerns or the inequities that have created them.

CASW urged the government of Canada to take this opportunity to close economic and social inequalities by addressing extreme wealth while ensuring that all people in Canada are supported and protected through, and beyond, this time of grave uncertainty.

"We demanded a stronger vision to rebuild Canada and what was delivered was more of the same" adds Davis-Whelan.

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CASW Budget Recommendations:

1. Move swiftly to implement a Universal Basic Income Guarantee to ensure Canadians receive the support required during and post COVID-19;
2. Introduce a Mental Health Parity Act that affirms that mental health is valued equally to physical health. A Mental Health Parity Act will help ensure that communities' and workplaces' policies, programs, and benefits attend equally to mental and physical health.
3. Adopt a [Social Care Act for Canada](#) to guide social investments and increase government accountability and measure return on investment and;
4. Implement student loan forgiveness for social workers that practice in rural and remote communities to increase equitable care, decrease wait times, attract, and retain social workers in these communities;