



September 28, 2026

The Right Honourable Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), and in advance of Mental Illness Awareness Week, I am writing to urge the immediate renewal of dedicated federal funding for mental health and substance use health in Budget 2027.

CASW appreciates the federal government's commitment to health funding through the 2023 *Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians* agreements. However, these funds are not specifically earmarked for mental health and substance use health care.

In 2017, the Government of Canada committed \$5 billion over ten years specifically for mental health and substance use health care. This funding is scheduled to end on March 31, 2027. It recognized the high rate of untreated mental health issues, the growing demand for substance use services, and the need for stable, community-based supports. CASW urges your government to renew this \$5 billion commitment immediately to protect continued access to crucial mental health and substance use health supports across Canada.

Further, CASW urges you to reinstate a Cabinet minister dedicated to mental health and substance use health. As Canada works to strengthen stability and security in an uncertain global environment, we must not overlook the conditions that create stability at home. A healthy and resilient country depends on people being able to get support before they reach a crisis point. Communities need resources that keep pace with emerging needs, and service providers need stability to deliver reliable, continuous support.

Finally, CASW recommends that the Government of Canada undertake a robust study to guide the development and implementation of mental health and substance use health parity in Canada. CASW urges the federal government to work with provincial and territorial partners, First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders, people with lived and living experience, and social workers to develop and implement a durable national framework for mental health and substance use health. That framework should achieve parity by providing stable funding, meaningful accountability and equitable access for everyone in Canada.

Building Canada Strong includes keeping people healthy, connected and resilient. Mental health and substance use health parity, grounded in stable policy and renewed dedicated funding, is an investment in public safety, social inclusion, workforce participation, families, and the strength of communities across Canada.

Respectfully,

Barbara Whitenect, President
Canadian Association of Social Workers

cc: The Honourable Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health