



Canadian Association of Social Workers

Founded in 1926, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is the national association voice for the social work profession. CASW has adopted a pro-active approach to issues pertinent to social policy/social work. It produces and distributes timely information for its members, and special projects are initiated and sponsored. With its concern for social justice and its continued role in social advocacy, CASW is recognized and called upon both nationally and internationally for its social policy expertise.

As a member of many national coalitions, including the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, the Health Action Lobby, the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century, and a frequent partner in strategic projects and initiatives with other national professional associations such as the Canadian Medical Association, CASW contributes to the social policy and advocacy landscape around many tables.

The mission of CASW is to promote the profession of social work in Canada and advance social justice. We look forward to working with you toward a better and more equitable Canada for all.

Recent CASW Priorities

- Advocating for the adoption of a **Social Care Act for Canada** to support equity across the country, strengthen federal leadership, and develop mechanisms for benchmarking of outcomes and for information sharing between provinces, thus enabling the development of *innovative approaches to end poverty*;
- Recommending the implementation of a **basic income** and a national **plan for child-care** to help put children, seniors, and families first;
- Urging the federal government to continue the restoration of federal leadership in health and social investments with **targeted approaches to ensure equity** in the areas of social finance, mental health, home care, and Canada's relationship with Indigenous people and communities.

Priorities in depth

1) Adopt a **Social Care Act for Canada** to guide social investments

CASW proposed the adoption of a Social Care Act for Canada with principles similar to those of the Canada Health Act to help guide the Canada Social Transfer (CST) and other social investments, making possible a national strategy with shared performance indicators.

Ten Principles of a proposed Social Care Act for Canada

1. Public administration
2. Comprehensiveness
3. Universality
4. Portability
5. Accessibility
6. Fairness
7. Effectiveness
8. Accountability and Transparency
9. Rights and Responsibility
10. Comparability

Such an *Act* would help guide the provinces and territories in developing policies that best fit their unique needs, while helping the federal government better understand where dollars are being spent – and, in turn, where more targeted investment might be needed. The proposed **Social Care Act for Canada** can be read in full on CASW's website, www.casw-acts.ca.

2) Prioritize children and seniors with a basic income and a plan for child-care

Low income families and seniors should be ensured a basic income to allow them to live in dignity regardless of labour market status. With a basic income, we can stop much involvement in the child welfare system before it begins, and prevent many costly acute health care interventions for seniors. Additionally, we know that children and seniors living in poverty are exponentially more likely to develop chronic health conditions including concerns around mental health and addictions.

CASW recommends that the federal government initiate a process to review the income security system in Canada to consider an affordable basic income. It should be targeted initially to provide income support families with children and seniors who may be economically vulnerable. As a measure that would significantly reduce poverty in Canada, a basic income also reduce the long term social and financial costs of poverty in areas such as health care, education and criminal justice.

In addition, and specific to children, CASW echoes the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's recommendations that a new national framework for early learning and child care must include:

- A commitment to build universal, affordable, inclusive, high-quality child care systems across Canada.
- A commitment to provide long-term sustained federal funding to ensure affordable, high-quality services together with a planned expansion of child care programs so that, by 2020, child care can become accessible to every child whose family chooses it.
- A commitment to work together to strengthen family supports including better and more equitable family leave from work and study, as well as access to more flexible work arrangements.

3) Continue the restoration of federal leadership in health and social investments with targeted approaches in the following areas:

Social Finance:

In terms of the development of a Social Finance and Innovation Strategy, CASW urges the federal government to carefully consider different social finance tools and their potential impacts. CASW is strongly in support of social enterprises and other initiatives and models that return benefits, and surpluses, to community. On the other hand, CASW is deeply concerned about pay-for-performance models that would allow private interests to profit off of vulnerable populations, or compromise service delivery due to profit incentives.

To read CASW's recommendations on social finance in *The True Cost of Capital: A Social Work Perspective on the Potential of Social Investments*, please visit <http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/TheTrueCostofCapital> .

Addressing Home Care:

CASW supports the Canadian Home Care Association's Harmonized Principles for Home Care, which emphasize that any future strategy adhere to the following tenants:

- Family- and Client-Centred Care
- Equitable and consistent access to appropriate care
- Evidence-Informed Care - Care is informed by clinical expertise, patient values and best available research evidence
- Integrated Care - Coordinated planning, delivery and alignment across multiple health and social care providers
- Sustainable Care - Provision of care that improves the client experience and achieves health and system outcomes in a cost effective manner.

Affordable Housing:

CASW supports the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) ask to continue and increase direct supportive housing investments, noting that the 2016 federal Budget introduced targeted funding programs to increase affordable housing for seniors and shelters for victims of violence. CASW

recommends that the federal government continue these programs beyond their two year mandate, and extend the program to include other forms of supportive housing such as housing targeted at seniors, LGBTQ*, veterans housing, and transitional housing for previously incarcerated individuals. Funding for these targeted supportive housing programs should be set at a minimum funding level of \$150 million per year. Ideally, these funds would flow through a social policy framework established by the Social Care Act.

Make Reconciliation a Priority:

CASW appreciates the promises to enact Jordan's Principle and put an end to the unequal funding child welfare services on reserve. However, CASW shares the First Nations Family and Caring Society's concerns that, because over half of the dollars earmarked for children on reserve will not be spent until the final year of this government's mandate, many of those currently in need will be ignored. CASW urges this government to take immediate action to bring equity of services to all Canadians on and off reserve.

Mental Health:

CASW is a proud member of the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH), the national voice for mental health in Canada. Established in 1998, CAMIMH is an alliance of 16 mental health groups comprised of health care providers and organizations that represent people with mental illness, their families and caregivers.

In September 2016, CAMIMH launched its comprehensive policy document, entitled ***Mental Health Now!*** which makes recommendations based on five pillars:

- 1) Ensure sustainable funding for access to mental health services by increasing the federal share of mental health spending to 25 per cent of the total, which would result in \$777.5 million more in additional annual federal direct funding support for mental health services.
- 2) Accelerate the adoption of proven and promising mental health innovations with a five-year \$100 million Mental Health Innovation Fund.
- 3) Measure, manage and monitor the mental health system's performance by establishing pan-Canadian mental health indicators.
- 4) Establish an expert advisory panel on mental health.
- 5) Invest in social infrastructure.

To learn more about CASW, visit www.casw-acts.ca .