

December 10, 2015

The Honourable Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Morneau,

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), I would like to extend sincere congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Finance.

As background for you, for 89 years CASW has been the national association voice for social work in Canada, with the dual mission of strengthening the profession and advancing issues of social justice. To this end, CASW is very optimistic that your government will deliver on the platform promise of real change.

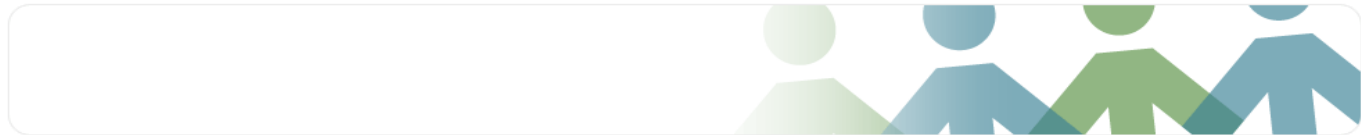
CASW is happy to learn that you will be reversing many of the changes made by the previous government; changes which served only to widen the gap between the rich and the working poor. Among these, CASW is deeply encouraged to read that you have been mandated to cancel income splitting and other unfairly targeted tax breaks, while retaining income splitting of pensions for seniors.

CASW hopes that, among these reversals, your office will return TFSA contributions to their original limit, as the previous government's increase to a \$10,000/year limit serves only to disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

CASW is also delighted to learn that your office has been mandated to meet with your provincial and territorial colleagues at the earliest opportunity to discuss the enhancement of the Canada Pension Plan, which could provide more income security to Canadians when they retire.

In terms of other commitments to seniors, CASW deeply values the promise to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for single low-income seniors by 10%, as it serves as a step forward in supporting our most vulnerable seniors, predominantly women, out of poverty. The commitment to restore the eligibility age for Old Age Security (OAS) and the GIS is also valued and appreciated.

As a Co-Chair with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) of the *Alliance for a National Seniors Strategy* (demandaplan.ca), CASW is fully supportive of your government's commitment to meet with the provinces and territories to develop a plan to fund a gradual enhancement of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Further, CASW acknowledges the significance



of your immediate commitment to invest \$3 billion, over the next four years, to deliver more and better home care services to all Canadians.

CASW encourages your government to seize leadership and build a comprehensive national seniors strategy in cooperation with the provinces and territories. To this end, CASW is a strong proponent of a national review of all current economic benefits for seniors, with the goal of developing a targeted Guaranteed Annual Income that will truly allow for seniors in Canada to live and die with dignity and respect.

CASW is also very optimistic about the collaborative nature of the mandate letters to you and your fellow Cabinet Ministers. As the best research available indicates that health, social, and economic outcomes are inextricably linked, CASW is glad to hear that you will be working to support the Minister of Children, Families and Social Development with the implementation of the new Canada Child Benefit (CCB).

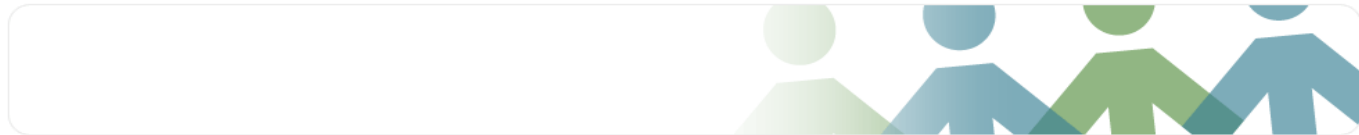
In this same vein, CASW is a very supportive of your government's commitment to return to cooperative federalism, especially as it pertains to the delivery of equitable health and social services across Canada. From our perspective, returning national leadership to our federation is paramount if Canada is to reduce the growing equality gap and comprehensively address [social, economic and health equity](#).

To be more specific regarding income equity, CASW recommends that the federal government initiate a process to review and renew the income security system in Canada with a view to the development of a targeted and affordable *basic income*, sometimes also referred to as a guaranteed annual income. A basic income could build upon existing negative income tax mechanisms such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors, and the Canada Child Tax Benefit for families with young children, the Working Income Tax Benefit.

In tandem with the commitment of your government to a new developing a new Health Accord, CASW proposes that your government boldly adopt [A New Social Care Act for Canada](#), to help guide the Canada Social Transfer and all new investments in social infrastructure that address the social determinants of health.

Like the Canada Health Act, CASW proposes that a *Social Care Act* be grounded in 10 principles that would not impose restrictions or regulations on the provinces and territories, but rather act as a social policy lens or framework to support the delivery of equitable services to all populations across Canada. Indeed, CASW is uniquely positioned in relation to the social determinants of health and social funding, as each day, social workers across Canada experience first-hand the negative impacts of a lack of social services and programmes on the clients they serve.

Finally, specific to our profession, each March is designated as National Social Work Month – a time for social workers gather to celebrate the profession and focus our advocacy efforts in support of real social change. In this regard, please accept this letter as a request to meet, preferably in March, however at your convenience, to further discuss our shared priorities in



building a more equitable Canada. As Minister of Finance, we are hopeful that you will seize this momentous opportunity to renew federal leadership and strongly consider meeting on the possibilities of a new *Social Care Act for Canada*.

Again, on behalf of the CASW federation, I extend our sincere congratulations on your election and subsequent appointment.

Sincerely,

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

Morel Caissie, MSW, RSW
CASW President