

December 10, 2015

The Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett  
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Bennett,

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

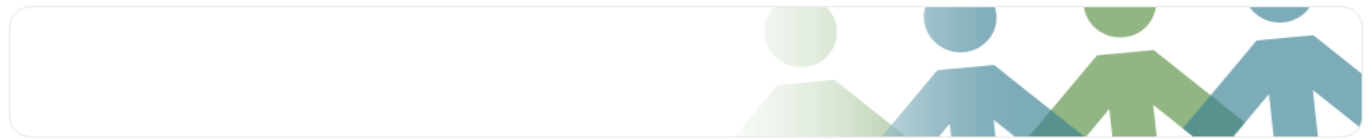
As background for you, for 89 years CASW has been the national association voice for social work in Canada with the dual mission of strengthening the profession and advancing issues of social justice. To this end, CASW is very optimistic that your government will deliver on the platform promise of real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

In particular, as outspoken advocates for practices that support the dignity and worth of all people, CASW is thrilled to learn that you have already begun the process of addressing Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. CASW is also very encouraged by your government's campaign promise to act upon all 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

Additionally, CASW is deeply encouraged that the 2% cap on annual funding increases has been lifted, and that you have been mandated to work with the Minister of Finance to establish a new fiscal relationship that will help create predictable and sustained funding for Indigenous Communities.

CASW has stood in solidarity with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCSC) and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) who, for nearly a decade, have fought a legal battle with the Government of Canada to have the voices of Aboriginal children and their families heard by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT).

CASW unequivocally supports the position of the FNCFCSC, arguing that on-reserve children are left with less programming and fewer quality services, and placed into foster care more often than off-reserve children due to funding gaps on reserves. Indeed, nearly half of children under 14 in foster care in Canada are Aboriginal, which is simply not acceptable. CASW urges you to help address these gaps in collaboration with your fellow Cabinet Ministers.



In this same vein, CASW is 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 inequality gap and comprehensively address [social, economic and health equity](#).

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 for Canada* 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, social workers across Canada can attest to the negative impacts of a lack of funding and social services for Indigenous communities. Adopting a bold vision such as a *Social Care Act for Canada* would stand to greatly benefit Canada's Indigenous populations.

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 Indigenous and Northern Affairs, we are hopeful that you will seize this momentous opportunity of renewed federal leadership and strongly consider meeting with CASW to further discuss the benefits of a *Social Care Act for Canada*.

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

Sincerely,

Morel Caissie, MSW, RSW  
CASW President