



February 14, 2022

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Duclos,

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), I am writing with regards to the content of your ministerial Mandate Letter. CASW is the national professional association for social work in Canada, with a dual mandate to support the profession and advance issues of social justice.

CASW's Board of Directors is comprised of a member from each of our ten provincial and territorial partner organizations, and we are proud to operate through a consensus model, giving our Association's voice a measured and considered approach to creating a fairer, better future in this country.

CASW is confident that you will build on your and your government's strong track record of making targeted investments and delivering historic strategies to address Canadians' overall wellbeing. We were delighted to see your government's campaign promise to ensure better access for all Canadians to health and mental health teams, as well as the acknowledgement of the key role of social workers through the pledge to include them in the existing Student Loan Forgiveness programme. We were also pleased to note the highly collaborative nature of your mandate letter – creating many opportunities to work across ministries – including on critical files such as mental health and substance use, and long-term care.

We are delighted to see your government centering the mental health through the development of a new Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Your government has a strong track record of prioritizing evidence based and public health approaches, and we know you will work tirelessly alongside Minister Bennett in this regard.

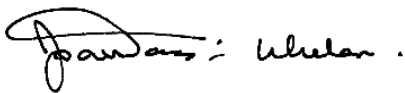
In terms of creating real change, the next vital step in supporting Canadians' mental health and well-being is bringing about *mental health parity*: the simple idea that all those who live in Canada should have access to mental health and substance use services in the same way they can rely on services for physical health. That said, the complexity is, as ever, in the details. We recommend that your government undertake a major study of the concept of *mental health parity* to determine the best way forward in achieving this important goal.

We were delighted to hear Prime Minister Trudeau's words on World Mental Health Day that "good health must include mental health -- that means taking care of our mental health just as we would our physical health." We could not agree more: taking the time to study and define a unique, made-in-Canada *Mental Health Parity strategy* would affirm this in both principle and in practice.

CASW was also very pleased to note you will be working alongside the Minister of Seniors to improve long-term care in this country. Just prior to the new year, [CASW released a suite of recommendations](#) for the future of long-term care, centered on improving the health and dignity of seniors, and the efficiency of the system. These recommendations include to: Increase federal funding for long-term care to, at minimum, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average; create a new Demographic Top Up Transfer; develop a Safe Long Term-Care Act collaboratively with the provinces and territories to create enhanced national standards, and incentivize and encourage the use of Registered Social Workers (RSWs) in all LTC settings; fund options to live and age in place; and co-create a new Framework for Indigenous Long-term Care. These recommendations can be [viewed in full here](#).

There is much work to be done as we begin charting a new course in the wake of COVID-19, but we are hopeful that, with your leadership, Canada can look beyond just recovery, but to a bold, just, and novel future. Your mandate letter contains much cause for hope and optimism, and we look forward to supporting your work and the Government of Canada more broadly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Davis-Whelan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke.

Joan Davis-Whelan, MSW, RSW
President, CASW