

Social work has always been essential.  
Now, social workers are...

# In Critical Demand



## National Social Work Month 2022 *In Critical Demand – Social Work is Essential*

In March of last year, Canada was hopeful that the year ahead would provide us with the opportunity to take a collective sigh of relief – and though vaccines have provided hope for a path forward, this year was more difficult than ever for social workers across the country.

And so, this year's theme is: *In Critical Demand – Social Work is Essential*.

Throughout COVID-19, your roles are more critical than ever as the pandemic continues to widen the pre-existing gaps in our social safety net. And despite all your personal and professional challenges, you continue to rise to the occasion, providing exceptional services, care, and leadership to people and communities across Canada.

Doctors and nurses are rightfully heralded for their contributions throughout the ongoing pandemic, and it is important for the public to be aware as well of our *essential* profession. As the representatives of the three pillars of the profession of social work, we are working hard every day toward the future of our profession, ensuring the public is aware of what we do and that future social workers receive pertinent learning, training, and oversight. We wish to acknowledge and lift up the contributions of social workers, social work educators and students while also recognizing the need to continue our shared efforts towards social justice, equity, and critical self-reflection as we advance reconciliation, anti-racism and equity.

This March, we will celebrate your amazing work more loudly than ever.

But though National Social Work Month is a time to celebrate, it's also a time to reflect, and this year's celebrations must go hand in hand with the recognition of the very real, very serious – indeed, critical – difficulties faced by our profession.

Even prior to the pandemic, Social Workers were often overworked and underpaid, and many social students were and continue to navigate unpaid practicums. But now, as you continue your essential work through the third calendar year of a once-in-a-generation pandemic, we know that professional and personal situations for many Social Workers are *critical*.

While we acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary devotion of social workers and their pivotal roles, especially in the context of an unprecedented world pandemic, we remain aware of the urgency of our opportunities for growth. The uncovering of mass unmarked graves of stolen and beloved Indigenous children on the grounds of former residential schools across the country brought renewed global attention to the historical and contemporary realities of colonialism in Canada. The ongoing efforts to locate and honour these little ones reminds us of the active involvement of our profession in colonial violence and our collective responsibility to continue to transform this legacy and champion decolonial change.

The ongoing centring of whiteness and the subsequent systemic violence of anti-Black, anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia we have witnessed during the pandemic, continues to remind us of the responsibility of our profession in preserving inherent social work values grounded in integrity, ethical practice, and equitable service to humanity, so they are being practiced and taught in a consistent, anti-oppressive and sustainable manner.

Despite these challenges, it is fundamental to our profession to close with a message of hope and resilience. As a profession grounded in principles of social justice, optimism comes naturally. We are secure in the knowledge that our profession is united in our shared commitment to sustain social change and to continue to transform the legacy of our profession through our daily efforts on the frontlines, in our classrooms and in our offices. For our part, in our respective and alongside those who are most vulnerable; before governments and policymakers; and in regulating the profession, we are working for a better future for social workers, those they serve, and all Canadians.

Last year, the theme for National Social Work Month was *Social Work is Essential*. It was chosen to reflect the essential roles that Social Workers played not only before and during the pandemic – but also the ones they will play in a just recovery. This year, while the situation may be critical, we are more certain than ever that you will be critical to the brighter days ahead.

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*Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR) represents provincial/territorial social work regulatory authorities in Canada.*

*Canadian Association for Social Work Education – L'Association canadienne pour la formation en travail social (CASWE-ACFTS) is a bilingual, Canadian association with a social justice focus that promotes excellence in social work education, practice, and scholarly activities. It does this through the enrichment of social work education, the accreditation of social work educational programs in Canada, advocacy, research, publication, consultation and collaboration at both Canadian and international levels.*

*Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is the national professional association. CASW promotes and strengthens the profession, supports its members, and advances issues of social justice.*