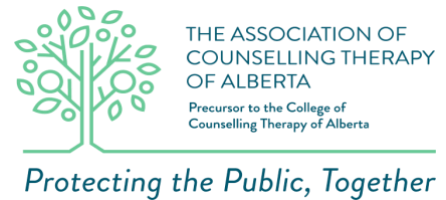


August 4, 2023

The Honourable Searle Turton
Minister of Children and Family Services
CS.Minister@gov.ab.ca



Dear Minister Searle Turton

Congratulations on your election and appointment as Minister of Children and Family Services. As partners with this Government serving the public interest, we want to continue working with you to support the mental health of children and families through the proclamation of the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta.

As you know, children, women and families are struggling with their mental health and finances and need assistance to improve their quality of life. Alberta needs more professionally trained mental health counsellors who can provide effective, safe counselling interventions. Over 4000 professionally trained Counselling Therapists are waiting to be regulated in the CCTA; many are trained to work with children, women, sexual assault survivors and families. However, they cannot fill vacant mental health counselling jobs in inpatient treatment centers, schools, hospitals, clinics, or sexual assault centers that require being regulated in the *HPA*, which leaves needed mental health positions unfilled—particularly in rural Alberta. Furthermore, many Counselling Therapists are limited to working in positions that don't utilize their full range of skills because they remain unregulated. Alberta's health system needs all hands on deck working at their full potential.

Our most recent meeting in April 2023, with the Ministry of Health and Addiction and Health Workforce Planning and Accountability, presented options on our file for the new Ministers to be briefed on, presenting a simplified path to an expedited proclamation.

It is concerning that unregulated counsellors can continue working in Alberta without training and following significant breaches of trust, such as sexual abuse or misconduct against clients because the CCTA regulations have yet to be proclaimed. **Regarding mental health, Alberta is lagging because it is one of the remaining jurisdictions that does not require mental health counselling to be accountable and safe.** We ask the government to complete the necessary work to proclaim the CCTA to ensure professional counselling services meet minimum health safety standards in the *HPA*.

We would like to meet with you to discuss the CCTA further and answer your questions. Albertans need widespread government support to coalesce, mobilizing the completion of this long-standing issue and increase Alberta's recovery capital. This file interconnects with various ministries and affects all Albertans. Please email Laura Hahn at registrar@acta-alberta.ca to advise of a date and time that works best for you.

Sincerely,

Laura Hahn, ACTA/CCTA Interim CEO and Registrar, registrar@acta-alberta.ca
CCd:
Chief of Staff, Brett Sparrow, Brett.Sparrow@gov.ab.ca
Chair of ACTA, Nicole Imgrund, Chair@acta-alberta.ca

Background and FACT Sheet ACTA/CCTA

The **Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (ACTA)** is the precursor organization to the **College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA)**. ACTA was established at the request of the government to build the CCTA and begin grandfathering the counselling professionals into the College to ensure a **seamless transition for Alberta's workforce**. ACTA has completed this work and has been prepared for the proclamation of the CCTA since 2021. The workforce, stakeholders (including employers and post-secondary programs), and the public are ready for counselling to be regulated in the CCTA. The delay in the proclamation creates unnecessary instability for Alberta's essential mental health workforce.

The Legislative Assembly of Alberta unanimously passed legislation to regulate counselling professions to address public health safety issues, improve mental health funding sources for the public, and increase access to mental health professionals throughout Alberta. Unfortunately, these concerns remain without the proclamation of the CCTA.

Regulation of counselling professions with the CCTA will Improve Albertan's Access, Affordability, and Safety of needed Mental Health Counselling:

- Provide **4000+ additional, safe, professionally trained practitioners** to help meet service demands and **fill vacant positions** throughout Alberta, including rural areas that require being regulated within the *HPA*.
- **Leverage the full scope of Alberta's professional counsellor's** training and competencies within the health care system.
- **Attract and retain the workforce** of mental health counsellors in Alberta, creating diverse education options with **streamlined credentialing to the CCTA**.
- Enhance counselling professionals' **labour mobility to Alberta** from other provinces and countries that regulate Counselling Therapy.
- Increase **Albertan's choice of when, where and how** they receive mental health counselling as many Counselling Therapists are trained in diverse modalities.
- Ensures Albertans receive mental health counselling accountable to **minimum health safety standards in the HPA**.
- Enhance **culturally safe** and competent mental health services for First Nation and Indigenous peoples as collaboratively established with First Nations.
- **Increase funding to Albertans through third-party insurance** plans, which typically only cover health services from regulated professionals.
- **Increases federal funding to First Nation and Indigenous peoples** through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program, which limits coverage for services to regulated health professionals only.