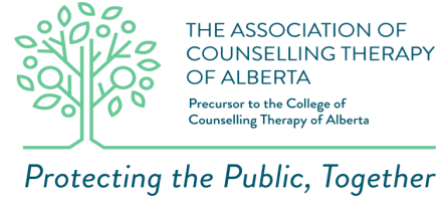


August 4, 2023

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis
Minister of Education
Education.minister@gov.ab.ca



Dear Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis

Congratulations on your re-election and appointment as Minister of Education. The need for regulation and proclamation of the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA) is not new to you, as you served as Minister of Advanced Education and post-secondary counselling programs, and students advocated to complete the CCTA to aid streamlining programs to credentialing.

Alberta must increase, retain and attract professionally trained counsellors instead of Counselling Therapists leaving to work in other regulated jurisdictions. The solution is readily available—prioritize the final steps to proclaim the CCTA. At our most recent meeting in April 2023 with the Ministry of Health and Addiction and Health Workforce Planning and Accountability, options were presented on our file for the new Ministers to be briefed on, with a simplified path to an expedited proclamation. We look forward to hearing the government is prioritizing completing the steps to proclaim the CCTA.

As partners with this Government serving the public interest, we want to work with you as Minister of Education to address the growing needs of students with mental health. Severe mental illness is impacting more of Alberta's youth. High-risk youth with mental health issues need skilled professional counsellors to provide evidence-based, ethical, safe interventions to treat and promote wellness. **Over 4000 unregulated, professionally trained Counselling Therapists in Alberta are waiting to be regulated by the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA).** Many Counselling Therapists have distinct training to treat youth; however, need to be regulated within the *Health Professions Act*. **Alberta is lagging because it is one of the remaining jurisdictions that does not regulate Counselling Therapists.** Completing the last steps to proclaim the CCTA increases professional diverse counsellors throughout the province to fill vacant and upcoming positions in schools, treatment centers and communities.

It is of significant concern 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. 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* and increase Alberta's mental health workforce.

We would like to meet with you to discuss the CCTA and answer your questions. Albertans need widespread government support to coalesce, increasing Alberta's recovery capital and mobilizing the completion of this long-standing issue without disrupting the Alberta's Recovery Oriented System of Care. Regulating professional counsellors 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 Interim CEO and Registrar, registrar@acta-alberta.ca
CCd
Chief of Staff, Shannon Gill, Shannon.gill@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.