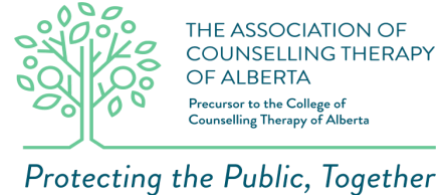


August 4, 2023

The Honourable Matt Jones
Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade
JEND.minister@gov.ab.ca



Dear Minister Matt Jones

Congratulations on your re-election and appointment as Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade. The need for regulation and proclamation of the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA) is not new to you, as you have served in ministerial roles involving mental health and safety needs for children and youth and affordability for all Albertans. We appreciate your support and want to continue working with you to increase Alberta's mental health workforce and address labour shortages by proclaiming the CCTA while further providing Albertans basic health safety through the *Health Professions Act* and improving affordability through third-party insurance and employment benefits.

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 ensuring no disruption to Alberta's Recovery Oriented System of Care. We look forward to hearing that the government is prioritizing completing the steps to proclaim the CCTA.

The CCTA aligns with your mandates; first, Alberta must increase, retain and attract professionally trained counsellors instead of them choosing different professions or leaving to work in other regulated jurisdictions. **Alberta is lagging because it is one of the remaining jurisdictions that does not regulate Counselling Therapists.** The government's prolonged delay in finalizing the regulations and proclaiming the CCTA creates uncertainty among current and future workers, students and post-secondary professional counselling education programs. **Proclaiming the CCTA stabilizes the workforce and attracts professionals from other jurisdictions to move to Alberta and have their credentials streamlined to the CCTA.**

Additionally, **Alberta's workforce needs quicker access and more options to address their mental health concerns.** According to Future Skills Centre, mental health-related disability claims are the fastest-growing type of claim and account for 70% of workplace disability costs. Proclaiming the CCTA increases the number and diversity of professional counsellors covered through employee benefits and insurance providers helping employees receive the mental health counselling when, where, and how they want.

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 would like to meet with you to discuss the CCTA and answer your questions. Albertans need widespread government support to coalesce, mobilizing the completion of this long-standing issue. 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, Jerry Bellikka, Jerry.Bellikka@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.