

August 5, 2023



The Honourable Jason Nixon
Minister of Seniors, Community, and Social Services
SCSS.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister Jason Nixon

Congratulations on your re-election and appointment as Minister of Seniors, Community, and Social Services. As partners with this Government serving the public interest, we want to work with you to support the last steps needed to proclaim the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA).

As you know, mental health and financial support are identified as priorities for this term. Seniors and vulnerable Albertans need assistance to improve their mental health and quality of life. 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. Over 4000 professionally trained Counselling Therapists are waiting to be regulated in the CCTA. Proclaiming the CCTA also increases funding through insurance companies for mental health counselling and Non-Insured Health Benefits Program and it increases eligible professionals to fill vacant mental health positions that require being regulated as part of the job qualifications.

Accountable and safe health services through statutory regulation in the *Health Professions Act (HPA)* is the first step needed to build a world-class health system. 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 Counselling Therapists who work in mental health 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 and answer your questions. Albertans need widespread government support to coalesce, mobilizing the completion of this long-standing issue. 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, Justin Marshall, Justin.Marshall@gov.ab.ca

Chair of ACTA, Nicole Imgrund, Chair@acta-alberta.ca

Background

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 in the College to ensure a **seamless transition for Alberta's workforce**. ACTA has completed the 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 **over 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 already 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 *Health Professions Act***.
- 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.