



5 February 2018

Honourable Rachel Notley

Premier, President of Executive Council

Dear Premier Notley:

RE: Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplace Act and the human services sector

ALIGN Association of Community Services (formerly AASCF) is a membership organization of agencies that contract to government through the Ministries of Children Services and Community and Support Services to provide services to vulnerable individuals, families and children involved within the human services sector. Bill 17 certainly is a renewed and revised standard for employers and for the most part truly is progressive.

We do want to draw to your attention that for agencies that provide contracted services (i.e. 24/7 services in residential care, 1:1 specialized services for high needs individuals; and for the family support workers who provide crisis work) this Legislation is prohibitive to their staff and we require variances to have staff available for those vulnerable Albertans. Hours of work averaging agreements are problematic as they require schedules that the employee must work and in the crisis driven nature of the work that is not feasible. We will be asking for variance in this to accommodate that time and to decrease the burden of overtime. We are currently working with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministries of Community Support Services and Children Services to see if we can get that variance. The reason this is important is because many people choose this line of work because it has been very flexible and fits with their family life, the restrictions in the legislation makes that more difficult for this helping profession as the agencies no longer can afford to accommodate staff in way they have before.

Unfortunately there was no consultation with the sector before the legislation was passed. As a result, ***it would be very helpful if there was a way to get an exemption to this part of the legislation now for 6 months while we work on the variances necessary so agencies are not outside of the law or having to pay huge amounts of funds in overtime to be compliant.*** As the legislation is written, the Ministries are not able to ask for the variances so it has been determined that the Associations (ALIGN and Alberta Council of Disabilities Services) must work towards these. This is not an easy task as we were not aware of these changes and challenges prior to January 1, 2018. We are only barely able to accommodate this work as there are many outstanding questions that the government needs to answer as we move forward. None of this is fast work and therefore the agencies are not in compliance.



Along with these issues comes the need for the funds to accommodate the Bill 17 changes including the costs of minimum wage increases, overtime increases, and statutory holiday's needs to be added to the contracts. As a beginning place we would like to draw your attention to the fact that these are contracted agencies providing mandated services to individuals, families and children who fit under the government legislation. Unlike other industries agencies contracted by government have no opportunity to increase the cost of services. Additional costs like 1.5 overtime and the public holiday and vacation pay requirements in the legislation are costing agencies significant dollars that must be added to their contracts. ***We respectfully request that if nothing else, these costs of overtime and holiday and vacation pay increases be added to the contracts immediately.*** Wages have not been increased in a few years, operating costs have not increased in many years, and many donor pools have dried up due to the economic situation in Alberta. Agencies simply cannot afford these costs on top of everything else. We recognize government has been supportive of the sector through the last few years and has not made cuts but these increases are just too much for the agencies to bare.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We would be happy to meet to discuss this further. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Barraclough, BSW, MEd., RSW

Executive Director

.cc Minister of Finance, Hon. Joe Ceci

cc Minister of Community and Support Services, Hon. Irfan Sabir

.cc Minister of Children Services, Hon. Danielle Larivee

.cc Minister of Labour, Hon. Christina Gray