



October 19, 2018

Premier Rachel Notley
Office of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

The Honorable Rachel Notley,

We want to commend you on leading your party, as government, for a full term and look forward to another term of the NDP next spring. We appreciate your efforts in implementing a number of initiatives for the human services sector and the vulnerable Albertans we serve.

As you are aware, ALIGN represents a number of agencies that contract with Children Services to provide a range of services from community support to campus based residential treatment care and everywhere in between. ALIGN also represents Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) agencies. Over the last year, implementation of Bill 17 and Bill 30 have had some unforeseen and unintended consequences for workers in this sector. While the intention is admirable, the added costs of providing service with respect to the changes required in each piece of legislation are unintentionally prohibitive.

Bill 17 - The Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act

We have been working along with Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) and Alberta Home Visitation Network Association (AHVNA) and the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Children's Services and Labour to explore regulatory options to changes in overtime requirements in Bill 17. During that time, numerous options were explored and some moments of frustration occurred as well as conflicting information and false starts. We have advocated for the flexibility required to manage the issue. Through meeting with the three Deputy Ministers we have arrived at a confirmation that the existing Caregiver Exemption should be interpreted broadly and applied to most direct service roles across Child Intervention, Home Visitation, PDD and FSCD.

As a result of our negotiations and the legislative requirements, and nature of staffing for 24/7 operations, there has been significant added costs for statutory pay and overtime. Many agencies have had to stop offering flexible time off due to the cost of overtime and will no longer offer services past



regular hours. These actions have led to lessening our ability to provide service in the community and an unsatisfied workforce. This was not the intent of the legislation as we understood it.

Bill 30 - An Act to Protect the Health and Well-Being of Working Albertans

We continue to discuss the impact and concerns related to changes to OHS requirements in Bill 30 with Ministry officials at Community and Social Services, Children Services and Alberta Labour including the human resource, administrative and financial impacts. Those issues include OHS expectations related to violence, right to refuse work, supervisory expectations and Health and Safety Committees. Although we support the intent and spirit of the legislation it has created some unexpected financial hardships. We have shared our concerns with ministry officials regarding these requirements and the challenges regarding recruitment, retention and training needs as well as the potential for an employer to have numerous smaller "worksites". Alberta Labour has confirmed that an employer can provide a rationale for meeting this requirement through a Health and Safety Committee structure instead, if it will meet the intent of the legislation to create a joint commitment and accountability for safety between workers and employers. The fact is that the added costs of having worksite safety committees and costs of the required training are difficult for agencies to manage.

The legislations are admirable and intended to be supportive of the workforce. However, the costs to implement the changes are unsupported by the legislation. We request that you increase the contracted sector funds to support these legislated changes. The unintended consequences of the legislation have led to high turnover rates; unsatisfied workers who have lost the flexibility of their work schedules due to increased costs; and agencies that have to decrease services to Albertans that are necessary for families.

In our work with the Ministries the constraining factor is the lack of consideration for the extra cost of the new legislations. The added costs of the legislations were not considered in the budget or its' development. As you can appreciate our sector budgets are extremely tight and changes like these, though unintentional, affect the bottom line, and essentially impact client outcomes. Surely it is not the intention of this legislation to create challenges for the social services sector that provides for vulnerable Albertans, as other initiatives that your government has supported has shown (increase FCSS funding, support to women's shelters). For Children Services, the government staff tells us the only way that there can be increases is through the procurement process. This process seems outdated (group care tenders were last done in 2006) and increases allowed by it have been few. We also know that the process is going to take extra time given the outdated and non-current contracts. Agencies have been expected to continue to offer quality services without these additional requirements being financially supported, which means funding intended for services has to be allocated to staffing costs.



Beyond these concerns, increased funds were to be allocated to this contracted sector as part of the 2018 Budget. No money has been added to contracts and procurement processes have not advanced, therefore agencies are another year without increases. While we understand those increases were limited, their availability would be appreciated for budgetary consideration. Budgets are very important to agencies that provide services to vulnerable people and who the government has a mandate to care for. It makes it more difficult to maintain a budget when contracts are not increased to accommodate inflation or the added cost of new legislations.

There are close to 40,000 employees in the child and family support/welfare and disabilities sectors; we feel it is important that you be made aware of the gravity of our concerns and hope that you will help us to work on some type of remedy. Respectfully, we would like to request a meeting with you to further discuss these issues.

Sincerely,



Rhonda Barraclough, BSW, MEd., RSW

.cc Honorable Danielle Larivee

.cc Honorable Ifran Sabir

.cc DM Darlene Bouwsema

.cc DM Shannon Marchand