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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Child Welfare League of Canada and the Canadian Association of Social Workers Welcome New Direction on Indigenous Child Welfare

Ottawa, ON – The Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) and the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) thank the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the Métis National Council (MNC), and other Indigenous organizations across Canada for advancing Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action in the area of child welfare. Newly introduced federal legislation has the potential to affirm Indigenous peoples' inherent right to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services, while setting criteria that would ensure that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children who are taken into care maintain their connections to family, community, culture, and language.

Bill C-92, an Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, is a significant step toward fulfilling Canada's responsibility under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – in particular, the right of Indigenous Peoples to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples, and the right not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including the forcible removal of children to another group.

“Generation after generation of Indigenous children have been separated from their families, culture, and community” states CASW President Jan Christianson-Wood. “Social workers acknowledge the profession's role in contributing to this harm and we are committed to bringing humility and accountability in support of realizing the intent of this legislation.”

Together the CWLC and CASW welcome this new direction for Indigenous Child Welfare as it acknowledges the right of Indigenous governance to self-determination in child welfare, in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's fourth call to action.

“We're hopeful, but we remain deeply concerned that without predicable and equitable structural funding for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations who are supporting Indigenous children and families, yet another generation of children will be at risk of losing connection to their families, communities and

nations” states Rachel Gouin, Executive Director of the CWLC. “We highly encourage the inclusion of guaranteed funding before the next federal election to provide a foundation for success of this potentially pivotal legislation.”

As the legislative process unfolds, we will be listening to Indigenous governments, communities, organizations, Elders, and youth leaders. CWLC and CASW welcome the opportunity for our members to work within a reformed child welfare system that is under First Nations, Inuit, and Métis jurisdiction. We are committed to working creatively, respectfully, and collaboratively with Indigenous peoples to ensure that children are safe and thriving.

“It’s time for every Canadian to think about what it will take for Indigenous children to live in dignity and respect and what role each of us can play to ensure this generation has the same opportunity to thrive as their peers,” says Gouin.

To the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, and other Indigenous organizations across Canada, we acknowledge the hard work you have invested in bringing us this far. All children in Canada will benefit from models of care that ensure young people have a strong sense of belonging to family, community, culture, and language. You can count on us to do our part.

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About the Child Welfare League of Canada:

The Child Welfare League of Canada aspires for all children to thrive, to know that they are loved, and to have a sense of belonging. We want to see more children grow up with their family, their kin and their community, and be connected to their cultural heritage and language. We also want children who are placed in care to achieve better outcomes and make successful life transitions.

Established in 1994, we are a national, membership-based charitable organization that advocates for and promotes legislation, policy, research, programs, and services that address the underlying causes of precarity and trauma. We convene leaders, organizations, researchers, governments, and people with lived experience to learn and improve our practices.

Our member organizations hail from all provinces and territories and include service agencies, Indigenous organizations, community groups, provincial/territorial governments, associations, universities, and child advocates.

About the Canadian Association of Social Workers:

Founded in 1926, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is the national association voice for the social work profession. The CASW Board of Directors is composed of members from our provincial/territorial partner organizations to assure a unified voice for the Canadian social work profession. The Board of Directors works from a national and, indeed, an international perspective to benefit the social work profession.

The mission of CASW is to promote the profession of social work in Canada and advance social justice. CASW is active in the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The expertise of CASW in social policy, its concern for social justice and its continued role in social advocacy is recognized and called upon by IFSW.

CASW has adopted a pro-active approach to issues pertinent to social policy/social work. It produces and distributes timely information for its members, and special projects are initiated and sponsored. CASW representatives serve on coalitions and participate on a host of affiliated, nationwide committees on a continuing basis. As well, they provide consultation with government, other professional and non-governmental groups and, of course, the general public.