



## **Systemic Changes and Courageous Conversations Needed for Reconciliation: CASW Stands in Solidarity with Indigenous People and Communities**

February 14, 2018 – The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) has long called on the federal government to fully address inequalities facing Indigenous people and communities, including overrepresentation in justice and child welfare systems. CASW urgently echoes Assembly of First Nations national Chief Perry Bellegarde’s call for a national strategy to address racism against Indigenous people.

CASW’s advocacy often takes the shape of demanding further services and funding to address the health, social, and economic inequalities resulting from colonialism. In light of recent events in our justice system, we must reiterate that structural change is also needed to address systemic racism in Canada

“The details of any individual case aside, dialogue around racism toward Indigenous people and communities is growing for a reason: because the examples are too numerous and widespread, and the outcomes too painful,” stated CASW President, Jan Christianson-Wood. “CASW refuses to accept the status quo and calls for immediate action to address racism and inequality within Canada’s systems.”

CASW has urged the federal government to end poverty through a basic income for all Canadians, to comply with Jordan’s Principle, to end unequal funding for Indigenous children, and has called for full compliance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. To these recommendations we now add the development of a strategy to address inequity and injustice faced by Indigenous peoples, which could include changes to the Criminal Code of Canada, changes to policies within the justice system to proactively counter racism, and education for non-Indigenous Canadians to build understanding of the trauma of colonialism.

“The journey of reconciliation will require funding and services, of course: but it will also require changes to the foundations of our laws and policies,” concluded Christianson-Wood. “For our part, from within the profession, CASW has adopted a reconciliation focus; committing to amplify Indigenous voices, provide continuing education for social workers on cultural safety, and continuing to demand changes to the status quo. Social workers know Canada can do better.”

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