

August 14, 2019

**Open Letter to Leaders of Manitoba Political Parties:  
Professional Accountability Must Be a Priority**

Professional regulation demonstrates a commitment to public accountability, ethics and excellence in social work. An important aspect of public accountability is to ensure that the people of Manitoba are confident that those practicing social work have demonstrated that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and ability to practice safely, competently and ethically.

The Manitoba College of Social Workers (“the College”) is the provincial body that regulates Social Workers in Manitoba. *The Social Work Profession Act* protects the title “Social Worker” and requires any individual who uses this title or represents themselves as a Social Worker to be licensed.

Ted Hughes, Commissioner for The Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry (2013), recommended that the government require anyone who practices social work in Manitoba, *under any title*, to be registered with the College because “mandatory registration is an important tool for promoting accountability of social workers and delivery of service according to best practice”. Social Workers are responsible for protecting and enhancing the wellbeing of our community’s most vulnerable and marginalised members who are often ill-equipped to properly judge the quality of service being provided. The human costs of unsafe or unethical practice are likely to be very high. We call upon the Manitoba Government to enforce these recommendations from 6 years ago.

Unfortunately, the Government of Manitoba does not require all employees who practice social work to be registered. In fact, many government agencies have changed position titles of employees who hold social work degrees and were formerly known as “Social Workers” to “Child Protection Workers”, “Case Coordinators” and “Counsellors” in order to sidestep regulation and as a result, avoid public accountability.

The Manitoba College of Social Workers calls on political leaders to take immediate action on the following election platform priorities:

- Ensure all eligible government staff working within the scope of social work practice are registered with the Manitoba College of Social Workers
- Amend *The Social Work Profession Act* to require anyone who practices social work in Manitoba, under any title, to be registered with the Manitoba College of Social Workers
- Amend the *Child & Family Services Act* to ensure that social workers, like health care professional under *The Mental Health Act*, are able to disclose information to the College in order to respond to complaints

It is a reasonable expectation that professionals are licensed as a meaningful way to ensure accountability, transparency and best practice in the interest of the public. The College calls upon political leaders to respond to this letter prior to the fall election in order to inform our membership and the voting public.

The College welcomes further discussion regarding these important issues. Please contact Barb Temmerman at 204-888-9477 or [info@mcsw.ca](mailto:info@mcsw.ca).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barb Temmerman".

Barb Temmerman, MSW, RSW  
Executive Director/Registrar

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicki Verge Burgess".

Vicki Verge Burgess, MSW, RSW  
President