

OTTAWA
April 20, 2020

MCSW & CASW Statement on Bill 34 & Children’s Special Allowance

The Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) and the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) reinforce the requests of other national and provincial organizations, deeply concerned with the wellbeing of children in Manitoba, for the Government of Manitoba to immediately withdraw the sections of Bill 34 that pertain to the Children’s Special Allowance.

“It is deeply disappointing that during a pandemic that has seized the world, the Government of Manitoba has chosen to introduce omnibus legislation with sections that have the potential of severely and negatively impacting the children of Manitoba” notes Vicki Verge Burgess, MCSW President.

On March 19, 2020 the Government of Manitoba introduced Bill 34– The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act - that includes provisions that would legally end the ability of current and former children in care to take legal action against the Government of Manitoba for withdrawing their Children's Special Allowance (CSA) funds. The Children’s Special Allowance is equal to the maximum Canada Child Benefit Payment and the Child Disability Benefit and is used for the care, maintenance, training, or education of children in care.

“Passing Bill 34 without fully studying the potential impacts on children and their rights is irresponsible and not within the spirit of upholding its duty and responsibility to ensure that children’s rights are protected and that they have an equal opportunity to thrive” states CASW President, Jan Christianson-Wood.

In 2018, a class action lawsuit was filed, on behalf of the off-reserve children who had their Children’s Special Allowance clawed back by the province. A trial date is set for September 2020, however if Bill 34 passes without amendment, the lawsuit would be invalid.

“We call on the Government of Manitoba to take a step back, withdraw the sections of Bill 34 pertaining to Children’s Special Allowance, and commit to upholding the rights of children with a full study on potential impact prior to proceeding any further”

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