Update on Proclamation
and Upcoming Town Hall Meetings
November 24 & 25

As you are all aware, earlier this year the Government of Alberta advised ACTA to be prepared for proclamation of the CCTA regulation as early as summer 2021. The Government, at the direction of the Minister of Health, brought the CCTA regulation up to the finish line of proclamation after a significant number of coordinated efforts between the Government and ACTA. However, based on recent communication from the former Minister of Health and a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Health, we now understand that the Government has changed its direction. The proclamation of the CCTA has been stalled.

ACTA has advised the Government of the numerous reasons why the regulation of the professions is both critical and urgent. The Government needs to be held accountable to its commitments to prioritize mental health and addictions in Alberta. Proclaiming the CCTA regulation would uphold this commitment by taking a simple, no cost to them, step to increasing access to mental and addiction services and protecting vulnerable Albertans accessing these services. The Government has further made commitments to support Albertans through the COVID-19 crisis, and there has never been a more critical time for them to proclaim the CCTA, stabilize the mental health and addictions workforce and increase capacity to provide mental health services. The Government needs to be held accountable for the work that has been done by the Ministry and ACTA, based on its commitments.

Despite this setback, the ACTA board wants to reassure you of our commitment to engage the Government to finish the proclamation of the CCTA regulation. The recent setback has only fortified our commitment to ensuring safety for vulnerable Albertans through regulation.

The ACTA Board will remain committed toward the proclamation of the CCTA regulation and the regulation of the counselling professions. This requires your continued support, and we ask that you remain committed to regulation as well. The Government is ultimately responsible for proclamation and ACTA is not able to promise if and when such proclamation will occur. The Government’s recent change in position has needlessly set Alberta back in ensuring Albertans receive safe and competent mental health and addiction services. ACTA commits to continue advocating to the Government that it be accountable to its commitments to the public and to regulate the professions of counselling therapy, addiction counselling and child and youth care counselling.

We believe protection of the public through regulation of the professions in Alberta is critical. It is untenable to think that Alberta will continue to remain an unregulated environment for the public receiving counselling services when almost all of North America protects the public through regulation. ACTA remains unwaveringly committed to its mandate, created in legislation, to open the CCTA, and to protect the public by regulating the professions.
What you can do:

- ** Remain steadfast** in your resolve to advocate and pursue regulation with ACTA.
- Now is an important time to **add your membership** in support of regulation, if you have not already done so. *Membership numbers express the magnitude of the profession’s support and represents the readiness of this workforce to provide accountable care to Albertans.*
- **Stay connected** for updated information and advocacy efforts you can participate in.

Next steps:

- **The ACTA Board’s Commitment:** we will honour ACTA’s sole purpose to pursue regulation of the professions of counselling therapy, addiction counselling, and child and youth care counselling in Alberta.
- ACTA expects to meet with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addiction in November. We commit to updating you following these efforts.
- The ACTA Board will continue strategic planning of advocacy efforts and sustainability of the organization through this delay.
- **ACTA Membership Town Hall Meetings,** please stay tuned for the invites:
  - November 24, 2021, noon - 1pm
  - November 25, 2021, 7pm - 8pm

*Our strength is in our numbers, our unity and our steadfast support of regulation. Your membership in ACTA is a testament to your support for regulation. It has provided ACTA with the resources and support needed to develop the College, and it continues to send a strong signal to the Government that the professions support regulation in the best interests of Albertans.*

More information and background:

**In June 2021,** ACTA was advised by Alberta Health that a concern was raised with the Premier by Treaty 6 Grand Chief Vernon Watchmaker and Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey. The Ministry advised ACTA that the only concern raised in the letter was whether Indigenous practices would be regulated by CCTA. The Government conveyed that before proclamation would occur, the Chiefs’ concern would need to be addressed and clarity given that CCTA will not be regulating Indigenous practices. There is a clear and definitive answer to this concern: the CCTA legislation exempts Indigenous practices from regulation and will not be affected.
ACTA has been told that the Premier responded to the Chiefs in June. ACTA asked for a copy of the letter from the Chiefs and the response from the Premier, so we could be well positioned to address the concerns. The Ministry did not provide copies of these letters.

The Minister of Health did not respond to our attempts to communicate with him further about this matter over the summer. No one in the Government has been able to confirm whether the Chiefs received communication from the Health Minister advising that Indigenous healing practices will not be regulated.

**September 20, 2021, letter:** In complete contradiction to his commitment to proclaim CCTA and address the concerns of the First Nations, on September 20, 2021, Minister Shandro sent a letter to ACTA stating: “Due to the serious and ongoing concerns raised by First Nations, I have determined not to proceed with the regulation of counselling therapists, addiction counsellors and child and youth care counsellors.” We wish to stress that this unexpected and surprising change in direction that he would not proceed with regulation is in contradiction to all of the Minister’s prior directions communicated to ACTA and the work he directed to be completed by the Ministry.

Minister Shandro left the position of Minister of Health on September 21, 2021, the day after he wrote to ACTA. ACTA reached out to the new Minister immediately after receiving the letter, in an attempt to have the Government reconsider the position and to maintain its commitment to regulation.

**Regarding the concerns from First Nations:** Without any further direction from Alberta Health about how to address the concerns of the Chiefs, ACTA decided to reach out directly to them in late September. We acknowledge this may not be correct protocol, as the Chiefs wrote to government leaders. However the government could not confirm to us whether there was a fulsome response to the Chiefs. ACTA has written directly to the First Nations’ Grand Chiefs to address their concern and respectfully request a meeting to listen and learn from them. The Chiefs have not responded yet, and we are respectfully awaiting their response. We see this as an opportunity to build on the Indigenous engagement and relationship building ACTA has already started. We are committed to developing a College that is inclusive, anti-racist and honouring of our obligations to reconciliation, and to require the professions to adhere to mandatory education and standards for anti-racism and cultural safety.

**October 29, 2021, Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Health:** ACTA executives requested a meeting with the Minister. The Minister could not meet with ACTA, and his office directed the Deputy Minister of Health to meet with us on his behalf. We met with Deputy Minister Paul Wynnyck, on October 29, 2021.

In this meeting, the Deputy Minister expressed that regulation of the professions is not a current priority of the Minister of Health, even though we made it very clear that provision of safe mental
health services is critical in the crises Albertans are now facing. They were unable to give us any clarity about why the Government has changed direction.

We expressed how important it is to ACTA to develop and maintain positive, respectful relationships with First Nations, and to develop a College that honours and actions reconciliation and has anti-racist policies. The Deputy Minister confirmed that he did not know of any other concerns expressed by First Nations other than regulation of Indigenous practices.

The Deputy Minister committed to discuss the CCTA proclamation with the Minister in November. He committed to having a follow up meeting with us in December. He also committed to securing a meeting between ACTA and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addiction in the coming weeks.

We wish to stress that ACTA explained to the Deputy Minister the importance of regulation, and the particular urgency given the pandemic and mental health, addiction and opioid crisis. We made it clear that we were speaking on behalf of the 1,400 professionals who have supported and funded this important work, and the 4,000 plus professionals who will belong to the College in the future.