

## 2024 Canadian Jewish Human Service Sector Public Policy Agenda

Canadian member agencies of the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (The Network) serve as a critical safety net for communities throughout Canada, providing emergency assistance, care for isolated older adults and persons with disabilities, mental health services, workforce and career counseling and resources for resettled immigrants and those fleeing persecution. The Network has established the following as its 2024 Canadian Jewish Human Service Sector Public Policy Agenda and in doing so seeks to address the most pressing needs of member agencies and the clients they serve:

### **Antisemitism:**

- Acknowledgment of the increase in antisemitic rhetoric and incidents within the service sector workplace and its impact on staff and community. The Jewish community has a collective trauma that must be recognized.
- Ensuring antisemitism training is included in all EDI workshops/ courses and for Jews to feel safe expressing opinion and attending public events without fear of backlash. This should include understanding IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) as the widely accepted definition of antisemitism.
- Providing all PSWS/ DSWs and those who work in culturally specific environments the resources to understand how to identify, call out and report antisemitism.
- Eliminating anti-Jewish bias in supportive housing applications and placements.
- Highlighting the impact of antisemitism on the mental health of staff and clients. Advocating for the Mental Health Transfer to include provisions for hate-crime related supports.
- Government action to ban hate and violence at mass protests and rallies targeting a specific community. Protests should be limited to public lands. Inciting hate and violence outside residential facilities, community agencies and support centers fosters an unsafe environment for those working in those settings and for those seeking assistance.

### **Workforce and Social Services:**

- That government acknowledges and addresses the crisis in the non-profit sector, including staffing shortages and lack of wage parity with the private sector, and how this reduces operational capacity at a time of continued extreme demand for services.
- The reinstatement of emergency funding for non-profit social services to address short-term urgent capacity needs.
- The establishment of a government sponsored Non-Profit Strategy that will provide the multi-year support needed to stabilize the non-profit sector. This Strategy should include:
  - Supporting the training, hiring, and retention of DSW and PSW workers to address staff shortages and ensure that seniors, including Holocaust Survivors, new immigrants and refugees and families with young children hit hardest by the pandemic, and others in need get the care they deserve.
  - Encouraging youth and new graduates to enter the non-profit sector through internship opportunities, wage support, and educational opportunities.
  - Promoting opportunities for nonprofit employee recruitment and retention including tax credits and grants.

### **Disability Services:**

- Calling on the Government of Canada to pass the Canada Disability Tax Benefit as soon as possible.

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- That legislation and regulations are put in place with the appropriate governments to encourage hiring employees with disabilities, to protect these employees from predatory practices, and ensure that employers are not de-incentivized to hire employees with disabilities.

#### **Housing:**

- Supporting the continued implementation of the National Housing Strategy to increase capital and operating funding for ethnocultural housing through both new capital projects and refurbishment of old units.
- Encouraging the building of more affordable housing by advocating for reforms of social service and non-profit housing to make it easier to convert existing units into affordable housing.
- Ensuring that affordable, safe and supportive housing is available for vulnerable communities, including refugees and newcomers, those fleeing domestic violence, youth leaving care, people with developmental and physical disabilities and those facing mental health or substance challenges.

#### **Food Insecurity and Economic Mobility:**

- Ensuring food security for Canadians by promoting the continuation or increase in support for food programs, including those to provide fresh and healthy food to those in need.
- Advocating for requirements that food security funding programs acknowledge and protect access for ethnocultural communities with religiously mandated dietary requirements, including access to kosher options, with a dedicated program for ethno-cultural food services.
- Calling on government to make sure the needs of the most vulnerable Canadians are included in measures to combat inflation and that all programs complement a client's capacity to secure employment that supports a living wage.

#### **Mental Health and Addictions:**

- Raising the urgent need for increased mental health and addiction support in Canada and calling on the federal government and provinces to finalize Mental Health Transfer negotiations and implement funding as soon as possible.
- In partnership with federal, provincial, and municipal governments, advocate for the investment in ethnoculturally appropriate care for mental health and addiction initiatives.
- Ensure a specific focus on youth mental health in government support, especially the need to study and address the long-term effects of the pandemic on youth and parents.
- Highlighting how the rise of antisemitism has impacted the Jewish community's mental health and providing targeted investment to deal with this increase.

#### **Skills Training and Newcomer Support:**

- Advocating for increased funding to help address adult education, skills training, and technology disparities so that all individuals are able to successfully enter and succeed in the job market, including integrated, competitive employment for persons with disabilities.
- Pressing government agencies to reduce backlogs, especially applications for new immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers that are pending processing by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).
- Include training/ support on different cultural groups within Canada. Weaving the history of antisemitism in Canada, how Canada has dealt with it and the present challenges to the community.

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