

November 6, 2019

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.,
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2



Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of the 390,000 members represented by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), I am writing to discuss the important role community services play as part of our social safety net.

We are sending this letter on November 6 because this date marks Community Service Workers Appreciation Day when, since 2008, unions and other stakeholders across Canada celebrate the critical role these workers play supporting and advocating for the most vulnerable in our communities. This day is an opportunity to recognize the dedication and professionalism of workers in a variety of community services, including adult mental health, group homes, children's treatment services, developmental services and women's services.

The National Union has always been on the front line of the struggle to defend and expand upon community services. We do so not just for our members who work in the sector but for all those who depend on them. We know that these services improve the quality of life for millions of people. Community services also strengthen our democracy by reducing inequality between citizens.

But, for far too long, government funding for community services at both the federal and provincial levels has made these services the poor cousin to health care and education. Governments have consistently underestimated the funding required to provide the support services and programs necessary to ensure people are able to lead lives filled with opportunity and dignity. But on top of that, when austerity measures are brought in, community services are often the first on the chopping block—just look at what's happened to autism services in Ontario.

Our members working on the front line have stories too numerous to tell of how they use their own resources to ensure agencies can continue to function. These workers are some of the lowest paid in the "caring" sector, yet have become the most resourceful in making do with what they have because that's always been their reality. The work is precarious and challenging, as the care clients require increases in complexity every day.

It is based on those factors and experience that the National Union is advocating for increased funding for community services that is long-term, stable, and targeted. As with our health care, there must be national standards of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, accessibility, fairness, accountability and transparency, and comparability.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." Right now, Canada is not doing the best job at this. Your government has the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of millions who need our support but who also deserve our respect and the ability to live in dignity.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Larry Brown', with a stylized, cursive script.

Larry Brown
President

cc: Bert Blundon, NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer
National Executive Board