

## Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Mandate Letter

Office of the  
Prime Minister



Cabinet du  
Premier ministre

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Duclos:

I am honoured that you have agreed to serve Canadians as Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

We have promised Canadians a government that will bring real change – in both what we do and how we do it. Canadians sent a clear message in this election, and our platform offered a new, ambitious plan for a strong and growing middle class. Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians.

We made a commitment to invest in growing our economy, strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it. We committed to provide more direct help to those who need it by giving less to those who do not. We committed to public investment as the best way to spur economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. We committed to a responsible, transparent fiscal plan for challenging economic times.

I expect Canadians to hold us accountable for delivering these commitments, and I expect all ministers to do their part – individually and collectively – to improve economic opportunity and security for Canadians.

It is my expectation that we will deliver real results and professional government to Canadians. To ensure that we have a strong focus on results, I will expect Cabinet committees and individual ministers to: track and report on the progress of our commitments; assess the effectiveness of our work; and align our resources with priorities, in order to get the results we want and Canadians deserve.

If we are to tackle the real challenges we face as a country – from a struggling middle class to the threat of climate change – Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. I expect that our work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians. We will direct our resources to those initiatives that

are having the greatest, positive impact on the lives of Canadians, and that will allow us to meet our commitments to them. I expect you to report regularly on your progress toward fulfilling our commitments and to help develop effective measures that assess the impact of the organizations for which you are answerable.

I made a personal commitment to bring new leadership and a new tone to Ottawa. We made a commitment to Canadians to pursue our goals with a renewed sense of collaboration. Improved partnerships with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are essential to deliver the real, positive change that we promised Canadians. No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples. It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Our platform guides our government. Over the course of our four-year mandate, I expect us to deliver on all of our commitments. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we fulfill our promises, while living within our fiscal plan. Other issues will arise or will be brought to our attention by Canadians, stakeholders, and the public service. It is my expectation that you will engage constructively and thoughtfully and add priorities to your agenda when appropriate.

As Minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government. This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees and the public service; constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society, and stakeholders, including business, organized labour, the broader public sector, and the not-for-profit and charitable sectors; and identifying ways to find solutions and avoid escalating conflicts unnecessarily. As well, members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, indeed all journalists in Canada and abroad, are professionals who, by asking necessary questions, contribute in an important way to the democratic process. Your professionalism and engagement with them is essential.

Canadians expect us, in our work, to reflect the values we all embrace: inclusion, honesty, hard work, fiscal prudence, and generosity of spirit. We will be a government that governs for all Canadians, and I expect you, in your work, to bring Canadians together.

You are expected to do your part to fulfill our government's commitment to transparent, merit-based appointments, to help ensure gender parity and that Indigenous Canadians and minority groups are better reflected in positions of leadership.

As Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, your overarching goal will be to increase Canadians' economic and social security. All Canadian children deserve a real and fair chance to succeed, and all Canadians should be able to live with dignity. I trust you will keep these principles uppermost in your mind as you deliver on our commitments, and I know you will undertake your work in a collaborative way with an appreciation that provinces and municipalities play a leadership role in these areas.

You will be the leader of a strong team of Ministers, supported by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities.

In particular, I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory, and Cabinet processes to deliver on your top priorities:

- Work with the Minister of Finance to design and implement the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), which will build on the existing Canada Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement and will replace the Universal Child Care Benefit.
- Work with the Minister of Finance to improve the income security of lower income seniors living alone by increasing the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) by ten percent, indexing Old Age Security (OAS) and GIS payments to a new Senior's Price Index, cancelling the increase in age of eligibility for OAS (65 to 67), and working with provinces and territories to ensure adequate and coordinated support programs to address seniors' poverty.
- Work with the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to launch consultations with provinces and territories and Indigenous Peoples on a National Early Learning and Childcare Framework as a first step towards delivering affordable, high-quality, flexible and fully inclusive child care.
- Lead the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that would set targets to reduce poverty and measure and publicly report on our progress, in collaboration with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. Our strategy will align with and support existing provincial and municipal poverty reduction strategies.
- Improve our Employment Insurance (EI) system so that it is better aligned with the realities of today's labour market and serves workers and employers. This would include:
  - repealing the recent changes made to the EI system that have been punitive to unemployed workers;
  - reduce EI premiums;

- undertaking a broad review of the EI system with the goal of modernizing our system of income support for unemployed workers that leaves too many workers with no unemployment insurance safety net;
  - eliminating discrimination against immigrants, younger workers and parents re-entering the workforce so that they are treated the same as other workers in their region;
  - reducing the wait time for new recipients to one week from the existing two week waiting period;
  - working with the Minister of Finance to ensure that EI contributions are only used to fund EI programs; and
  - working with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to set transparent service standards for the delivery of EI benefits so that Canadians get timely access to the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Work with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, to support her efforts to rationalize and expand the intergovernmental agreements that support skills training, including Labour Market Development Agreements which fall under your leadership through Employment Insurance.
  - Provide more generous and flexible leave for caregivers and more flexible parental leave.
  - In your role as Minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, work with the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to develop a strategy to re-establish the federal government's role in supporting affordable housing, including:
    - prioritizing infrastructure investments in affordable housing and seniors' housing, including finding ways to support the municipal construction of new housing units and refurbishment of existing ones;
    - providing support to municipalities to maintain rent-geared-to-income subsidies in co-ops;
    - providing communities the money they need for Housing First initiatives that help homeless Canadians find stable housing;
    - working with the Minister of Finance to encourage the construction of new affordable rental housing by removing all GST on new capital investments in affordable rental housing;
    - working with the Minister of Finance to modernize the existing Home Buyers' Plan to allow Canadians impacted by sudden and significant life changes to buy a house without tax penalty;
    - working with the Minister of Finance to ensure that the new Canada Infrastructure Bank provides financing to support the construction of new, affordable rental housing;

- working with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to conduct an inventory of all available federal lands and buildings that could be repurposed, and making some of these lands available at low cost, or no cost, for affordable housing;
  - undertaking a review of escalating home prices in high-priced housing markets and considering all policy tools that could keep home ownership within reach for more Canadians;
  - bringing forward a proposal to prevent mortgage fraud; and
  - using the restored mandatory long-form census to ensure that decisions on housing are made using the best and most up-to-date data available.
- Work with the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, as well as with provinces, territories and stakeholders, to develop a National Disabilities Act to eliminate systemic barriers and deliver equality of opportunity to all Canadians living with disabilities.
  - Work with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour to develop a Social Innovation and Social Finance strategy.
  - Work with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to set transparent service standards so that Canadians get timely access to the benefits to which they are entitled.

These priorities draw heavily from our election platform commitments. The government's agenda will be further articulated through Cabinet discussions and in the Speech from the Throne when Parliament opens.

I expect you to work closely with your Deputy Minister and his or her senior officials to ensure that the ongoing work of your department is undertaken in a professional manner and that decisions are made in the public interest. Your Deputy Minister will brief you on issues your department may be facing that may require decisions to be made quickly. It is my expectation that you will apply our values and principles to these decisions, so that issues facing your department are dealt with in a timely and responsible manner, and in a way that is consistent with the overall direction of our government.

Our ability, as a government, to successfully implement our platform depends on our ability to thoughtfully consider the professional, non-partisan advice of public servants. Each and every time a government employee comes to work, they do so in service to Canada, with a goal of improving our country and the lives of all Canadians. I expect you to establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister, whose role, and the role of public servants under his or her direction, is to support you in the performance of your responsibilities.

In the coming weeks, the Privy Council Office (PCO) will be contacting you to set up a meeting with PCO officials, your Deputy Minister and the Prime Minister's Office to further discuss your plans, commitments and priorities.

We have committed to an open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians, lives up to the highest ethical standards, and applies the utmost care and prudence in the handling of public funds. I expect you to embody these values in your work and observe the highest ethical standards in everything you do. When dealing with our Cabinet colleagues, Parliament, stakeholders, or the public, it is important that your behaviour and decisions meet Canadians' well-founded expectations of our government. I want Canadians to look on their own government with pride and trust.

As Minister, you must ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with the *Conflict of Interest Act* and Treasury Board policies and guidelines. You will be provided with a copy of *Open and Accountable Government* to assist you as you undertake your responsibilities. I ask that you carefully read it and ensure that your staff does so as well. I draw your attention in particular to the Ethical Guidelines set out in Annex A of that document, which apply to you and your staff. As noted in the Guidelines, you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law. Please also review the areas of *Open and Accountable Government* that we have expanded or strengthened, including the guidance on non-partisan use of departmental communications resources and the new code of conduct for exempt staff.

I know I can count on you to fulfill the important responsibilities entrusted in you. In turn, please know that you can count on me to support you every day in your role as Minister.

I am deeply grateful to have this opportunity to serve with you as we build an even greater country. Together, we will work tirelessly to honour the trust Canadians have given us.

Yours sincerely,

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada

\*This Ministerial Mandate Letter was signed by the Prime Minister in the Minister's first official language.