



Extended Healthcare
Professionals Coalition



Coalition des
professionnels de la santé

June 23, 2023

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough P.C., MP
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Qualtrough,

Re: Canada Student Loan forgiveness program expansion

On behalf of the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC), we would like to follow up on the expanded access to the Canada Student Loans Forgiveness Program outlined in your party's election platform in 2021. As a coalition representing 12 national professional health and social organizations, we applaud your government's commitment to enhance and expand the current Canada Student Financial Assistance Program.

We had a presentation from your Senior Policy Analyst, Rosanne Waters on July 19, 2022. She recognized that given the shortages in health human resources even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada Student Loan Forgiveness was introduced as one way to complement existing provincial, territorial, and federal efforts to combat the major, complex issue of the shortage of health care professionals in rural or remote communities. It was also intended to help under-served rural or remote communities get the primary health care they need by creating financial incentives for healthcare professionals to relocate or return to a rural or remote community.

At this time, she indicated that your department first needed to further define rural and remote communities to ensure it includes communities in need. She also confirmed that Budget 2022 announced that the list of professions eligible for Canada Student Loan Forgiveness would be expanded and the details would be announced in the coming year. Following that, on February 2, 2023, we received an update on the consultation process from Erin Hetherington. During this update we were informed that a "What We Heard" report would come out this spring, but we have not yet seen the report?

Following several weeks of waiting, we have heard from the Ministry that they further exploring options for the expansion of the list of professions. The message further stated that the Ministry expects it will take a few months before they in a position to consult/seek input again. From EHPC's position, the previous consultation process, which many of our members participated in, was rigorous and we are unsure what, if any, further consultations would be required?

Expanding access to this broader set of professionals would support your government's stated commitment to better serve rural communities. This is especially significant in the wake of the critical shortages of physicians and nurses in these communities. The government should commit to robust and comprehensive support for rural communities to position them for a better future. Canada Student Loan Forgiveness for rural and remote regions was introduced as one way to complement existing provincial, territorial, and federal efforts to combat the major, complex issue of the shortage of health care professionals in rural or remote communities. It was also intended to help under-served rural or remote communities get the primary health care they need by creating financial incentives for healthcare professionals to relocate or return to a rural or remote community. Expanding the list of eligible professions under the program would further achieve these goals.

We trust you will move swiftly with your Ministerial Colleagues in Employment and Social Development Canada, Rural Economic Development and Families, Children and Social Development to implement this important campaign commitment and would be delighted to provide any support that may be of assistance.

Ondina Love, Chair of EHPC, will follow up with your office in the near future to offer any support possible. She can be reached at 613-797-9462 or by email at olove@cdha.ca.

Sincerely,

Ondina Love, CAE
 Chair
 Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition



About the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC)

EHPC aims to improve the health and welfare of all Canadians; promote excellence and innovation in health research and practice and promote the advancement, development, dissemination and application of knowledge that advances health, social services and well-being for Canadians.

Our membership includes:

- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
- Canadian Association of Optometrists
- Canadian Association of Social Workers
- Canadian Chiropractic Association
- Canadian Dental Association
- Canadian Dental Hygienists Association
- Canadian Pharmacists Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- Denturists Association of Canada
- Dietitians of Canada
- Speech-Language & Audiology Canada

- cc. The Honourable Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development
The Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health
The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for Northern Affairs
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services
The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr., Minister of Labour