



# Expanding Student Aid to Physiotherapists

## A Proposal from the Canadian Physiotherapy Association

### Challenge

Canada needs more healthcare workers, period. In Canada, the number of physiotherapists per capita is already well-below the OECD average[1]. The physiotherapy profession is facing the same acute crisis in health human resources (HHR) as other healthcare professions, leading to shortages in rural and remote communities. **Resolution of this crisis will require a combination of incentives and strategies that capitalize on the untapped opportunities within the physiotherapy profession.**

### Insight

Patients and providers know the health teams model delivers the best outcomes. The success of this model has generated demand for more physiotherapists,[2] in more parts of the country than ever before. Funding for direct improvements in HHR for primary care saw traction in 2020 when approximately 5,500 doctors and nurses participated in the Canada student loan forgiveness program. **Those doctors and nurses now actively support inclusion of their trusted partners in primary health, physiotherapists, within the student loan forgiveness program.**

## Physiotherapy Graduates by the Numbers

**2.7K+** Number students enrolled in PT programs (2022).

**915** Number of physiotherapy graduates (2022).

**97%** Become practicing physiotherapists.

**68%** Leave school with student debt.

**\$40K** Average level of student debt.

**15** Canadian universities offer post-graduate studies in physiotherapy.

# Proposal

**Expand the Canada Student Financial Assistance program to physiotherapy students, using the tools the federal government has in-hand to help tackle the health human resources crisis and build on its existing progress of driving new doctors and nurses into rural and remote communities.**

## What Our Partners in Health Say



Smaller and more rural and remote communities often do not have the availability or accessibility of physiotherapy services. We strongly encourage the expansion of the CSFA to include physiotherapy students, as this expertise supports a team-based care approach across Canada.

**SYLVAIN BROUSSEAU**  
President, Canadian Nurses Association



With the ongoing surgical backlog, the inclusion of physiotherapy students within the CSFA program would not only expedite patient recovery and care but also allow us to tap into and optimize their scope of practice in rural and remote communities across Canada.

**DR. OLUFEMI AYENI**  
President-Elect, Canadian Orthopaedic Association

## Benefits Beyond the Profession

**The recommendation may yield the following benefits to the overall healthcare ecosystem:**

- 1** Attract more Canadians into healthcare professions.
- 2** Increase healthcare access for underserved communities.
- 3** Enhance student recruitment from rural communities where retention remains a challenge<sup>[3]</sup>.

### For more information

Please review the full CPA [Pre-Budget submission](#) or contact Kayla Scott, Senior Director of Advocacy at [kscott@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:kscott@physiotherapy.ca)

# CITATIONS

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[1] Deloitte. (December 2023). The Economic Impact of Physiotherapy in Canada. Prepared for Canadian Physiotherapy Association.

[2] Vader, K., Ashcroft, R., Bath, B., Décary, S., Deslauriers, S., Desmeules, F., Donnelly, C., Perreault, K., Richardson, J., Wojkowski, S., & Miller, J. (2022). Physiotherapy Practice in Primary Health Care: A Survey of Physiotherapists in Team-Based Primary Care Organizations in Ontario. *Physiotherapy Canada. Physiotherapie Canada*, 74(1), 86–94.  
<https://doi.org/10.3138/ptc-2020-0060>

[3] Bath et al. (2020). Re-imagining rural and remote physiotherapy in Saskatchewan: Summary Report. Retrieved online <https://cchsa-ccssma.usask.ca/mhac/documents/event-report-re-imagining-rural.pdf>