



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association

Association
canadienne de
physiothérapie

WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS IN ADVANCE OF THE 2026 BUDGET

Submitted by the **Canadian Physiotherapy Association**



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APRIL 2026

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1

That the government expand access to physiotherapy services to improve primary care access, reduce surgical backlogs, and support labour force participation.

2

That the government support the sustainability of community-based physiotherapy clinics as essential providers of accessible care and workforce health.

3

That the government implement a pan-Canadian approach to improve national mobility and workforce integration.

4

That the government integrate physiotherapy into proposed strategies for women's health.

5

That the government enable physiotherapists to practice to their full scope within federally funded health programs.

6

That the government support the integration of internationally educated physiotherapist (IEPTs) by investing training, support and streamlined pathways to practice.





PHYSIOTHERAPY KEEPS CANADIANS WORKING AND REDUCES HEALTH SYSTEM COSTS

Canada's health system faces rising demand, workforce shortages, and increasing rates of chronic and complex health conditions. At the same time, labour force participation and productivity remain ongoing economic challenges.

Physiotherapy sits at the intersection of these priorities.

Physiotherapy keeps Canadians working. It enables people to recover from injury, manage chronic conditions, and remain active in the workforce. As a result, physiotherapy is not only a health service, but a practical solution to workforce and economic challenges.

Musculoskeletal conditions are among the leading causes of disability in Canada, accounting for approximately one third of disability claims and a major contributor to work absence.^[1] At the same time, shortages of health professionals, including physiotherapists, are expected to persist.^[2]

Strategic federal action to better integrate physiotherapy into the health system will improve access to care, reduce system pressures, and support labour force participation.

1

EXPAND ACCESS TO COST-EFFECTIVE PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

That the government expand access to physiotherapy services as a cost-effective means of improving health outcomes, reducing pressure on acute care, and supporting labour force participation.

Timely access to physiotherapy improves outcomes and reduces reliance on more expensive parts of the health system. Early intervention prevents acute conditions from becoming chronic, reduces hospital use, and avoids unnecessary procedures. For example, a timely physiotherapy diagnosis and intervention for musculoskeletal injury can prevent prolonged disability, reduce reliance on diagnostic imaging and specialist care, and support long-term recovery and a function-focused plan for a faster return to work. Physiotherapy is key in lowering both health system and productivity costs.[3]

Physiotherapy strengthens team-based primary care by improving access to non-physician providers. It also contributes to reducing surgical backlogs by offering both alternatives to surgery and effective post-operative recovery support.

From an economic perspective, physiotherapy enables faster return to work, reduces disability impacts and durations[4], and supports productivity. This helps Canadians recover sooner and remain active in the workforce.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN:

- Target investments for publicly funded physiotherapy through federal health transfers and priority funding envelopes
- Include physiotherapy in federal primary care and workforce strategies
- Expand access through federally funded programs (e.g. VAC Health ID card, NIHB, Jordan's Principle, IFHP)





2

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY AND WORKFORCE HEALTH SYSTEMS

That the government support the sustainability of community-based physiotherapy clinics as essential providers of accessible care and workforce health.

Community based physiotherapy clinics are the backbone of accessible care in Canada. They deliver timely, patient-centred services that prevent injuries, manage chronic conditions, and support recovery, keeping patients out of hospitals and reducing system strain.

They are also critical to workforce health. Musculoskeletal conditions account for a significant share of workplace disability costs, and early access to physiotherapy shortens disability durations and improves return to work outcomes. Physiotherapy supports recovery and return to function through tailored treatment plans centered on a specific diagnosis that is aimed at addressing the injury and reducing chronic pain reliance on pain medications.[\[5\]](#)

However, these clinics face growing pressure from rising costs, workforce shortages, and stagnant reimbursement rates. Without action, access to community-based care will decline, leading to injuries or conditions being unaddressed and potentially worsening, which may result in unmet patient needs and greater demands on urgent or emergency care.

Supporting private physiotherapy practice protects access, strengthens small businesses, and improves system efficiency, helping Canadians stay healthy and working.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN:

- Support small- and medium-sized health enterprises through targeted tax and workforce measures
- Ensure federal programs reflect the true cost of delivering care
- Promote early access to physiotherapy within disability and workforce programs
- Convene insurers, employers, and provinces to advance best practices in benefits design

3

ADVANCE NATIONAL MOBILITY TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE CAPACITY

That the government support pan-Canadian approaches to improve physiotherapist mobility, workforce planning, and access to care.

Canada's physiotherapy shortage is both a health system and economic challenge. Improving access to physiotherapy prevents disability and helps Canadians recover and return to work faster.

Strengthening national mobility would enable physiotherapists to practice where they are needed most, improving access in underserved areas, supporting virtual care, and enabling surge capacity during periods of system pressure. This would also improve access to care for more Canadians, regardless of location.

Enhanced coordination across jurisdictions would strengthen workforce data, planning, and system responsiveness, aligning with federal priorities related to labour mobility, health human resources, and digital modernization.

This approach ensures that workforce capacity is used more efficiently, helping Canadians access care sooner and return to work faster.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN:

- Support a pan-Canadian mobility framework for physiotherapists
- Invest in workforce data systems and digital infrastructure
- Align workforce strategies with labour mobility priorities





4

INVEST IN PHYSIOTHERAPY TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S HEALTH OUTCOMES

That the government integrate physiotherapy into women's health and workforce participation strategies.

Improving women's health is both a health and economic priority. Expanding access to physiotherapy can improve quality of life, increase workforce participation, reduce long-term health costs, and contribute to economic growth.

Physiotherapy supports women across the lifespan, including during pregnancy, postpartum recovery, perimenopause, and menopause. It also supports chronic pain management and musculoskeletal conditions. These services improve function, reduce symptoms, and enhance quality of life. Pelvic health physiotherapists are uniquely trained and best positioned to access and manage conditions related to pelvic floor dysfunction, providing targeted, evidence-based care that other providers are often not equipped to deliver.^[6]

Despite these benefits, access to physiotherapy that supports women's health remains limited. Financial and geographic barriers often delay care, leading to worsening conditions and increased reliance on more costly interventions.^[7]

Improving access to physiotherapy helps prevent complications, reduces pain, speeds recovery, and improves function, all of which are vital in supporting women's participation in work and daily life.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN:

- Integrate physiotherapy into federal women's health initiatives
- Expand access through federally funded programs
- Support preventative and early intervention models
- Align with gender equity and workforce participation strategies

5

ENABLE FULL SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

That the government enable physiotherapists to practise to their full scope within federally funded health programs.

Physiotherapists are trained to deliver a broader range of services than is currently utilized across the health system. Enabling full scope of practice⁸ is a low-cost, high-impact solution that improves access, reduces wait times, and maximizes existing workforce capacity.

Allowing physiotherapists to practise to full scope ensures patients receive timely, appropriate care while enabling physicians and specialists to focus on more complex cases.

This approach improves system efficiency and strengthens the use of existing health human resources, helping Canadians recover faster and return to work sooner.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN:

- Embed full scope utilization in federal-provincial-territorial agreements
- Align federal program requirements with physiotherapy competencies
- Support interdisciplinary and modernized care models





6

ACCELERATE INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

Internationally educated physiotherapists represent a highly skilled and growing portion of Canada's workforce^[9,10], yet many face lengthy and costly processes before entering practice. With only 998 Canadian-trained physiotherapists graduating in 2025, Canada cannot meet current or future demand without better integrating internationally trained professionals into the health system.

Targeted federal support for bridging programs, clinical training opportunities and establishment of a national identifier could accelerate workforce entry while maintaining high standards of care.

Improving IEPT integration will help address workforce shortages and ensure more Canadians can access timely physiotherapy services. This is a practical, high-value investment that strengthens the health workforce and helps keep Canadians working.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN:

- Invest in clinical bridging and training programs to accelerate IEPT entry into practice
- Expand access to supervised clinical placements and mentorship opportunities
- Support initiatives to improve IEPT licensure pathways and workforce mobility

CONCLUSION

Physiotherapy professionals are uniquely positioned to deliver practical, high-value solutions to Canada's health and economic challenges.

By improving access, strengthening community-based care, expanding workforce capacity, and enabling full scope of practice, the Government of Canada can improve health outcomes while supporting productivity and labour force participation.

Physiotherapy keeps Canadians working.

An investment in physiotherapy is an investment in a healthier population, a stronger workforce, and a more sustainable health system.

ABOUT THE CANADIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) represents physiotherapy professionals, including registered physiotherapists, physiotherapist assistants, physiotherapy technologists, and students across Canada. Physiotherapy professionals provide essential expertise, rehabilitative care, and treatment, enabling Canadians to live well and actively participate in all facets of their lives.

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