



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association Association
canadienne de
physiothérapie

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April 8, 2020

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

RE: Canadian Physiotherapy Association calling for changes to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

On behalf of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA), which represents 15,000 physiotherapy professionals and students across Canada, I would like to thank the Government of Canada for its rapid response to Canadians experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We recognize the unprecedented speed with which the government is acting to put in place measures to support Canadians and appreciate the undertaking. However, we have identified a critical gap in the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which stands to leave many physiotherapists out of this important program and have a negative impact on access to healthcare and the health of many Canadians. We are therefore requesting that you make changes to the CERB to include a modest income allowance.

Many physiotherapists own or work in clinics that have temporarily closed due to provincial orders and to ensure infection control measures such as physical (social) distancing are implemented to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. For many Canadians, however, the care and treatment offered by physiotherapists is crucial in keeping them mobile, healthy and active, and in preventing the need to access urgent or emergency services in-hospital.

Physiotherapy services are essential services and must remain available in order to respond to emergency and urgent conditions (such as traumatic injuries, stroke), and for those with chronic health conditions (such as cystic fibrosis, MS, chronic pain and chronic heart failure). In many cases, physiotherapists are turning to technology and offering virtual healthcare services and tele-rehabilitation to continue to support and protect the health of Canadians at this time. Enabling physiotherapy services to continue to treat chronic and urgent conditions outside of the hospital setting means that in-hospital capacity can be focused on the meeting the demands associated with the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Tele-rehabilitation and virtual healthcare delivered by physiotherapists helps Canadians regain and maintain mobility, maintain health and manage pain while limiting exposure to COVID-19 by staying home. This approach allows physiotherapists to continue to serve their patients during the pandemic and helps maintain access to health services for some of our most vulnerable Canadians. However, virtual care only offsets a small portion of the revenue lost from clinic closures - it does not provide a comparable income stream to normal operations. As such, physiotherapists providing necessary ongoing services through virtual care are facing a significantly reduced income, and by earning even a minimal income they are currently ineligible for the CERB.



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Expanding the CERB to include a modest income allowance would help ensure physiotherapists are able to access much-needed financial support while still ensuring patients have access to necessary healthcare services. This would also be an important stabilization measure as we begin to think about what Canadians will need in the recovery phase of COVID-19. As many Canadians affected by COVID-19 may require ongoing therapy for years to come, private clinics and community services must survive these difficult economic times so they are available to provide care outside of the acute care system as we move past the initial stages of the pandemic. Physiotherapy clinics and individual physiotherapists need access to financial supports being provided by government to ensure they remain financially viable so they can continue to serve our communities as they recover from the pandemic. We have the opportunity to adjust the CERB now to enable physiotherapists to both continue to provide care for their patients and access the emergency income needed to get through the immediate financial hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Physiotherapists are an integral part of the health care system and they play a key role in protecting, maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of patients. We encourage you to recognize the critical role physiotherapists play during these difficult times by expanding the CERB to allow a modest income to be earned.

We look forward to continuing to support the government in its efforts to deal with COVID-19 pandemic and welcome any opportunities to contribute to its decisions and actions. Please contact us with any questions or if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

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cc:
The Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health