



Registered Massage Therapists'  
Association of Ontario

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April 9, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Block  
Ottawa, Ontario  
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Dear Prime Minister:

The Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario (RMTAO) is appreciative of the many initiatives the Government of Canada has put in place to mitigate the devastating economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on small businesses and self-employed individuals. The RMTAO represents 14,000 Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs) across Ontario, the overwhelming majority of whom are self-employed. We also recognize and support the many thousands of self-employed RMTs Canada-wide who are represented by our counterparts in each province.

The RMTAO supports the containment measures that have been put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, and recognizes that they are an essential step to ensuring public health. Unfortunately, these measures are also resulting in extreme financial hardship for our self-employed members, many of whom do not have access to Employment Insurance. Your understanding of these circumstances has been helpful to many of our members, however there are still a number of gaps in the programs that have been announced that will result in many of our members being unable to access the relief that they desperately need.

Some small businesses desperate to access the government's loan program, known as the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), will not qualify for help under the program's criteria. The program does not allow the inclusion of business owners who operate as sole proprietors with a small staff and low payroll expenses. In addition, small business owners who do not take a salary for payment because of how their businesses are set up, are not eligible for the program. Most of our members have only 1 to 4 workers. The CEBA program could be highly attractive, however one of the challenges is that the loans require businesses to have paid out at least \$50,000 in salaries last year. This would exclude a large number of our members who are self-employed, sole proprietors, or even smaller incorporated operators. Another issue with the CEBA program is that it penalizes businesses that do not have enough salary costs, and instead distribute income through dividend income or sole proprietorships. Many of our sole proprietor members earn and declare business income as opposed to salary, and they may not have any employees on the payroll or a very small payroll. It would be helpful if the minimum payroll requirement is eliminated from the CEBA. In addition, many of these same businesses have been forced to close and are left with little or no income to cover operational expenses that are still accumulating, even if some costs are being deferred. The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy Program as proposed will also have many gaps that will preclude our members and their workers from receiving assistance for many of the above noted reasons.

RMTs play a vital role in providing health services to Canadians. They assist with rehabilitation, improve the quality of life of the elderly and alleviate the physical symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety. RMTs help people relieve their musculoskeletal pain so they can remain at work longer and continue to enjoy the activities that they love. Massage therapy has also been recognized as a potential non-drug alternative to opioids in the treatment of chronic pain. While many of these essential services will have to be suspended during this pandemic, any financial support you can offer RMTs will ensure that these services resume as quickly and effectively as possible once the worst of this situation has passed.

The RMTAO would appreciate receiving information from the Prime Minister that we can share with our members that will assist in helping them cope financially with this unprecedented crisis. We are also interested in providing further input or otherwise assisting in the Government's efforts in responding to the crisis, especially measures that affect RMTs and their patients. We are similarly interested in measures that affect all self-employed individuals and small business owners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Feraday". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Michael Feraday  
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer  
Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario

CC: Andrew Sheer, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Jagmeet Singh, Leader, New Democratic Party  
Jo-Ann Roberts, Interim Leader, Green Party of Ontario  
Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs  
Hon. Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance