



## REGISTERED MASSAGE THERAPISTS ASSOCIATION OF BC

*Safe, Effective Healthcare*

April 14, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Block  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

The Registered Massage Therapists' Association of British Columbia (RMTBC) very much appreciates 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 RMTBC represents 4000 Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs) across British Columbia, the overwhelming majority of whom are self-employed. We also recognize and support the many thousands of self-employed RMT colleagues Canada-wide who are represented by our counterparts in each province.

The RMTBC fully supports the containment measures that have been put in place both federally and provincially to stop the spread of COVID-19 as we recognize that they are an essential step to ensuring the safety of the public and lessening the spread of the virus.

Unfortunately, these measures are resulting in extreme financial hardship for our self-employed members, many of whom are currently ineligible for Employment Insurance or the Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit. Your government's 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, resulting 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, Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), will not qualify for help under the program's current 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. Many of our members have only 1 to 4 staff.

The CEBA program could address this need 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 many of our members who are self-employed, sole proprietors, or even smaller

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incorporated operators. It appears the current eligibility criteria for CEBA penalizes businesses that do not have sufficient salary costs, and instead distributes income through dividend income or sole proprietorships. Many of our sole proprietor members earn and declare business income as opposed to salary. They may not have any employees on the payroll or have a very small payroll. An elimination of the minimum payroll requirement for CEBA eligibility would benefit many of our members.

Additionally, 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 currently delivered also has many gaps that will preclude our members and their staff 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 patient's musculoskeletal pain enabling them to remain at work longer and continue to enjoy the activities of daily living. Massage therapy has been recognized as a potential non-drug alternative to opioids in the treatment of chronic pain.

While many essential services have been suspended during this pandemic, any financial support your government can offer RMTs will ensure that these services resume as quickly and effectively as possible once the worst of this situation has passed.

The RMTBC 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. We appreciate the numerous initiatives government has put in place and support any measures that would assist in filling in those gaps mentioned above.

Sincerely,

Gordon MacDonald BSc  
Executive Director, RMTBC