

March 5, 2021

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy  
Minister of Finance  
Frost Building South,  
7 Queen's Park Crescent,  
Toronto, M7A 1Y7

The Honourable Victor Fedeli  
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation  
and Trade  
18th Floor  
777 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

***Re: Supporting Ontario's Health Care Professionals Through Small Business Supports***

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy and Minister Fedeli,

A coalition of regulated health professional associations is writing to you today to ask that you give further priority to the sustainability of community-based health care providers. While [Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover](#) included important initiatives to help select small businesses survive during the pandemic, key initiatives do not apply to our members who own clinics or practice in a small business environment. This includes the *Main Street Relief Grant for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)* and the *Ontario Small Business Support Grant*.

Minister Bethlenfalvy, at the announcement of the *Main Street Relief Grant for PPE*, you said: "Small business owners and entrepreneurs have overcome significant challenges and made extraordinary sacrifices to continue contributing to our communities through these unprecedented times". Health care professionals are among those small business owners and entrepreneurs who have made sacrifices, yet they cannot access this grant. Further, many of our members voluntarily donated their supply of PPE to frontline workers during the first wave of the pandemic to address the initial province-wide shortage.

Minister Fedeli, at the announcement of the *Small Business Support Grant*, you said: "As they have in the past, small businesses will continue to play an important role in Ontario's economic future. The Small Business Support Grant offers a critical injection of funds that can help power them through today, so they can be ready for a brighter tomorrow". Health care professionals are among those small business owners who require support, yet they cannot access this grant as health care professionals continue to deliver services even though significantly impeded and reduced by the province-wide shutdown. The impacts of restrictions and shutdowns have had deleterious impacts on our members' practices and revenues all while they are assuming increased occupational risk of exposure to COVID-19 inherent to being a health care worker.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on all Ontarians, including regulated health care providers who have been asked to maintain services in keeping with new operational requirements directed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the resumption of health services in order to help hospitals at a time when they are being stretched to capacity. This has significantly impacted how we practice, leading to reduced patient volumes, capacity limitations to comply with social distancing requirements, and drastically increased costs for PPE. Providers are also extending their normal hours of operation in order to meet the demand while adhering to capacity limitations.

Clinics took on the increased costs for the procurement of needed PPE. In a few short months, providers spent thousands of dollars on PPE while avoiding passing these costs on to patients. Some providers have also had to hire a full-time cleaning employee in order to meet the infection prevention and control standards put in place by the government and our respective regulatory bodies.

All of these cost-drivers have created challenges which will affect the financial viability of health clinics and practices that operate at low profit margins even in normal times. If these clinics are to respond to the

needs of Ontarians now and into the future as we recover from the pandemic, support for these small businesses must be included in the upcoming budget and in any future economic recovery plans for our province.

Statistics Canada has reported increased stress and worsening mental health for the majority (63%) of health care providers<sup>1</sup>, while the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry reported that 54 per cent scored high on symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder<sup>2</sup>. Both studies confirmed the source of deteriorating mental health is high workloads and restricted access to PPE.

In recognition of the social and financial commitments that many health care providers have undertaken at a time when their incomes are severely reduced, we are asking that you recognize that many community-based health care providers are also small business owners, in desperate need of inclusion in the Main Street Relief Grant for PPE and the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. This would show support for members who own small businesses, their staff, and the entire healthcare system which depends upon them to keep patients out of hospital emergency departments.

We look forward to seeing the work of our members further reflected in your Ministry's priorities and economic recovery plans. Thank you for your time and consideration. Each of the associations endorsing this letter would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the realities facing our members at your convenience, and to discuss ways to support Ontario's community-based health care workers.

Endorsed By:

Association of Dental Technologists of Ontario  
Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario  
Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario  
Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences  
Ontario Association of Mental Health Professionals  
Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors  
Ontario Association of Optometrists  
Ontario Chiropractic Association  
Ontario Dental Association  
Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association  
Ontario Kinesiology Association  
Ontario Physiotherapy Association  
Ontario Psychological Association  
Ontario Society of Chiropodists  
Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists  
Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario  
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario  
The Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists  
The Denturist Association of Ontario

c The Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
The Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister, Small Business and Red Tape Reduction

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210202/dq210202a-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0706743720961729>