



Registered Massage Therapists'
Association of Ontario

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June 10, 2020

Hon. Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
5th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Deputy Premier:

The Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario (RMTAO) is appreciative of the many initiatives of the Government of Ontario to mitigate the devastating impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

However, the comments you and the Premier made in response to a question from Global News during your afternoon press conference on June 9 were very disturbing to the profession of massage therapy and very upsetting to many of our members. The question was, "how is possible to get a massage in Toronto but you can't get a haircut. How does that make any sense?" To which the Premier replied, "I can't even argue with you on that..." He then turned the question over to you. The focus of your answer was on close face-to-face proximity rather than clarifying that Registered Massage Therapists are regulated health professionals and hairstylists and estheticians are not. You mentioned the precautions that dentists are required to follow by their regulatory college but did not mention that RMTs have a similar regulatory college that requires similar precautions. We found this response likely to increase public confusion and diminish the role our profession plays in health care.

As you know, Registered Massage Therapist are one of 26 regulated health professions in Ontario. From that perspective, we are regulated in the same way as physicians, dentists, nurses and all the other regulated health professions. As a regulated health profession there are universal high standards in place to protect the public developed by the regulatory college. This, of course, is very different from hair stylists or other professions that are not regulated. Our members were dismayed that you would not make that distinction clear in response to the question. The issue is not a matter of proximity but rather the ability of the profession to assure the public that the profession operates within certain high standards that protect both the public and the providers.

The RMTAO advocates for 14,000 Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs) across Ontario and we have over 6,000 members. As regulated health professionals, our members want to do their part to support Ontarians in quickly and safely returning to normalcy, including a return to their normal access to health care.

RMTs play a vital role in providing health services to Ontarians. They assist with rehabilitation, and alleviate the physical symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety. RMTs help people relieve their musculoskeletal pain so they can remain at work longer, continue to enjoy the activities that they love and in some cases avoid further medical care from doctors or hospitals. Massage therapy has also been recognized as a potential non-drug alternative to opioids in the treatment of chronic pain.

Many of our members support patients with essential and, in some cases, urgent care, and these patients have been without access to our support for an extended period. Massage therapists are

able to treat both chronic and acute injuries and conditions, including offering post-surgical support and support to people managing potentially debilitating symptoms of chronic conditions.

We are also concerned about the long-term effects of social isolation and prolonged stress on Ontarians. We feel that RMTs have an important role to play in providing relief from the physical symptoms associated with stress, anxiety and depression. Studies have indicated that massage therapy can be beneficial to patients' mental health and improve the quality of their working lives, which is incredibly important during these times.

Our Association has committed to work closely with the regulatory body, the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO), to ensure that our members are prepared and equipped to safely and gradually resume the important care they provide to their patients based on the CMTO and Ministry of Health requirements.

The RMTAO is asking that both the Premier and the Minister of Health issue a statement of correction. A public response would be appreciated and help inform the public of the difference between regulated health professions and other businesses.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Feraday", is centered within a light gray rectangular background.

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

CC: The Honourable Doug Ford, MPP
Robin Martin, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care