



Extended Healthcare  
Professionals Coalition



Coalition des  
professionnels de la santé

June 27, 2023

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough P.C., MP  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Qualtrough,

**Re: Canada Student Loan Forgiveness program expansion**

On behalf of the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC), we would like to follow up on the expanded access to the Canada Student Loans Forgiveness Program outlined in your party's election platform in 2021. As a coalition representing 12 national professional health and social organizations, we applaud your government's commitment to enhance and expand the current Canada Student Financial Assistance Program.

We had a presentation from your Senior Policy Analyst, Rosanne Waters on July 19, 2022. She recognized that given the shortages in health human resources even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada Student Loan Forgiveness was introduced as one way to complement existing provincial, territorial, and federal efforts to combat the major, complex issue of the shortage of health care professionals in rural or remote communities. It was also intended to help under-served rural or remote communities get the primary health care they need by creating financial incentives for healthcare professionals to relocate or return to a rural or remote community.

At this time, she indicated that your department first needed to further define rural and remote communities to ensure it includes communities in need. She also confirmed that Budget 2022 announced that the list of professions eligible for Canada Student Loan Forgiveness would be expanded and the details would be announced in the coming year. Following that, on February 2, 2023, we received an update on the consultation process from Erin Hetherington, Director of Program Policy. During this update we were informed that a "What We Heard" report would come out this spring, but we have not yet seen this report.

Following several weeks of waiting, we have heard from the Ministry that they are further exploring options for the expansion of the list of professions. The message stated that the Ministry expects it will take a few months before they are in a position to consult/seek input again. From EHPC's position, the previous consultation process, which many of our members participated in, was rigorous and we are unsure what, if any, further consultations would be required.

Expanding access to this broader set of healthcare professionals would support your government's stated commitment to better serve rural communities. This is especially significant in the wake of the critical shortages of physicians and nurses in these communities. The government should commit to robust and comprehensive support for rural communities to position them for a better future.

We trust you will move swiftly with your Ministerial Colleagues in Employment and Social Development Canada, Rural Economic Development and Families, Children and Social Development to implement this important campaign commitment and would be delighted to provide any support that may be of assistance.

Ondina Love, Chair of EHPC, will follow up with your office in the near future to offer any support possible. She can be reached at 613-797-9462 or by email at [olove@cdha.ca](mailto:olove@cdha.ca).

Sincerely,



Ondina Love, CAE  
Chair  
Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition

Ondina Love, CAE  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association



François Couillard  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canadian Association of Optometrists



Hélène Sabourin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists



Dr. Ayla Azad  
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JP Cody-Cox  
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Dawn Wilson, CAE  
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Mallory Porter  
Executive Director  
Denturists Association of Canada



Joelle Walker  
VP of Professional & Public Affairs  
Canadian Pharmacists Association



- cc. The Honourable Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development  
The Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development  
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health  
The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for Northern Affairs  
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services  
The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr., Minister of Labour

### **About the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC)**

EHPC aims to improve the health and welfare of all Canadians; promote excellence and innovation in health research and practice and promote the advancement, development, dissemination and application of knowledge that advances health, social services and well-being for Canadians.

Our membership includes:

- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
- Canadian Association of Optometrists
- Canadian Association of Social Workers
- Canadian Chiropractic Association
- Canadian Dental Association
- Canadian Dental Hygienists Association
- Canadian Pharmacists Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- Denturists Association of Canada
- Dietitians of Canada
- Speech-Language & Audiology Canada