



Coalition des
professionnels de la santé



Extended Healthcare
Professionals Coalition

February 1, 2024

The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
Place du Portage Phase IV
140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0J9

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Extended Healthcare Professionals Coalition (EHPC), I am writing to strongly encourage the federal government to live up to its [commitment](#) to expand the list of eligible occupations under the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Program.

The EHPC includes over 100,000 regulated healthcare professionals, and we speak with one voice to ensure that Canadians have access to health services provided across the public and private sectors and that the full range of health care services are fully recognized and valued by decision makers, funders and Canadians.

While it was encouraging to see that there was strong support for the program's expansion to include other professions as set out in the summary from the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Consultation, recent attempts to fulfill this commitment have faced significant delays. In order to effectively address the unique challenges faced by rural and remote communities, a more nuanced and multifaceted approach is essential, one that goes beyond the conventional strategy of bolstering the numbers of physicians and nurses.

The breadth of our services, such as psychological, vision, dental, pharmaceutical, cognitive, speech, hearing and physical rehabilitation care help reduce unnecessary hospitalization, dependency on pain medications, premature entry into long-term care facilities, while improving health outcomes. These essential preventative, diagnostic and treatment care options are particularly important in rural and remote areas where the [population](#) has a higher concentration of Indigenous and elderly residents. Residents in these areas face a [heavier burden of illness](#) and a diminished life expectancy, often grappling with advanced age and lower incomes compared to their urban counterparts.

An [overwhelming majority of Canadians](#) strongly agree that federal funding for our healthcare system should be a priority. Expanding the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Program will have a direct impact on improving healthcare system accessibility in rural and remote areas, which are currently [underserved](#).

Understanding the complexity of providing timely care to the people of Canada, EHPC respectfully requests that the federal government immediately proceed with honouring its commitment to expand this needed and valued program.



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Sincerely,

François Couillard

Chair, Extended Health Professionals Coalition

CEO, Canadian Association of Optometrists

fcouillard@opto.ca

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



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cc. **The Honourable Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development**

The Honourable Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

The Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health

The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for Northern Affairs

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services

The Honourable Ya'ara Saks, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr., Minister of Labour and Seniors

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
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Chiropractic Association



Fred Phelps
Executive Director
Canadian Association of Social Workers



Dr. Aaron Burry
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Dental Association



Glenn G. Brimacombe
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Psychological Association



Kriszy Bell
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Physiotherapy Association



JP Cody-Cox
Chief Executive Officer
Dietitians of Canada



Dawn Wilson, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
Speech-Language & Audiology Canada



Mallory Porter
Executive Director
Denturists Association of Canada



Joelle Walker
VP of Professional & Public Affairs
Canadian Pharmacists Association

