

May 15, 2020

Ms. Helen Angus,
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Health

Mr. Matthew Anderson,
President and CEO, Ontario Health
Ministry of Health

Dr. David Williams,
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ministry of Health

Via email

RE: [Physiotherapy Services in the Community](#)

Dear Deputy Minister Angus, Mr. Anderson and Dr. Williams;

Physiotherapists and the growing number of patients waiting for physiotherapy care are very concerned about yesterday's announcement about the first phase of re-opening services. The announcement was unclear as to the status of needed healthcare services in the community and has left many anxious and seeking clarification. In addition, we have been informed post-announcement that there can be no reopening of physiotherapy clinics and practices until the Chief Medical Officer of Health amends or revokes Directive #2 and the government amends the List of Essential Workplaces.

A fundamental issue is that which qualifies as 'non-essential' for the first two weeks of the closure of physiotherapy and other healthcare services is very different from what is 'non-essential' after two months of delay in receiving care. It is very hard for patients who are suffering and/or experiencing significant limitations to their function and mobility, or who are experiencing increasing levels of pain, to understand why everyone is able to shop, play golf and access other services, but they cannot be treated for their growing healthcare needs.

Physiotherapy services in the community, including clinic-based care, must be re-opened to address the growing and urgent needs of patients in Ontario who are suffering and need physiotherapy in areas including, but not limited to;

- Access to the full continuum of care required for their conditions after hospitalization, not just after surgeries or "procedures", but also for other chronic and acute conditions, including recovering from COVID-19.



- Treatment and help to manage debilitating pain and mobility issues whose conditions inevitably worsen with delays in obtaining care in the community and who will face long-term limitations if they continue to be unable to obtain care.
- Programs and treatments for WSIB claimants that require in-person services, so workers can return to their jobs, or to their full workplace duties.
- Injuries after motor vehicle accidents whose treatments have been limited by the unavailability of in-person care, or where in-person care has been inaccessible due to insurer-imposed limitations on virtual care.

In the announcement yesterday, and in the supporting documentation, businesses were admonished not to open unless they can do so safely and in keeping with public health and labour guidance. Physiotherapists in the community have been working hard to source the PPE and infection control products they need to re-open and to develop plans to optimize physical distancing within clinics. In addition, the same direction that applies to businesses can be applied to health care practices, namely to open only if they can fulfil all patient screening, infection control and patient, practitioner and employee safety requirements. More so than many of the businesses included in the announcement yesterday, the regulation of health care professionals elevates the consequences of not meeting these standards to a very high level for each individual physiotherapist. Those physiotherapists who have secured the appropriate PPE and infection control resources and can fulfil all requirements are ready to open and we have the regulatory structure to ensure we do so safely, in keeping with our standards of practice.

We reiterate that the essentiality of physiotherapy has been demonstrated by the fact that the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Québec included physiotherapy in the first wave of professions those governments allowed to return to in-person practice. The same should apply in Ontario and we urge the amendment of the List of Essential Workplaces and the amendment or revocation of Directive #2 to open access to the full range of physiotherapy services that patients require.

We would be available to meet at your earliest convenience to discuss how we can help with this work and the role that physiotherapy can play in re-opening health care services in Ontario.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Sauvé". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dorianne Sauvé
Chief Executive Officer