

December 1, 2020

Mr. Darryn Mandel
President
College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
375 University Avenue, Suite 800
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2J5

RE: Provisional Practice Registration Category

Dear Mr. Mandel,

I am writing as President of the Ontario Physiotherapy Association (OPA) and on behalf of the Board of Directors to request the Council of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario (CPO) undertake remedial action for those who have lost their provisional practice certificate of registration due to failing their first challenge of the clinical component of the Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE).

It is our understanding that up to 77 individuals were not successful in their first attempt at the clinical component in November 2019 and the next scheduled exam (June 2020) was cancelled due to the pandemic. For over a year, therefore, they have not been able to practise their chosen profession. These individuals include graduates from Canadian university programs and some internationally educated candidates who would have completed the credentialing review of the educational qualifications and qualified for the clinical component of the national exam.

We are writing on behalf of these 77 current and on behalf of untold future candidates who currently face significant delays in being able to challenge the clinical component of the PCE as a result of the pandemic. Those who fail will no longer be able to practise until the next opportunity to take the clinical component of the PCE. That component is already backlogged with those who had planned to challenge the exam for the first time in June or November 2020.

At this time the health care system must increase its capacity to meet the diverse health needs of Ontarians. This situation for candidates has the potential to negatively impact the availability of qualified physiotherapists to meet this increasing demand. This will be amplified with higher numbers of registered physiotherapists choosing not to renew as they near retirement age during these challenging times.

Of all the regulatory jurisdictions for physiotherapists across Canada only British Columbia (BC) and Ontario had the single failure clause in their registration categories that would lead to the revoking of a provisional practice licence/registration. Within Ontario few regulated health professions are held to this requirement and most allow up to two failings prior to loss of provisional practice status.

In BC, the Minister of Health in response to the work of the regulatory College and the provincial Association has allowed up to 22 candidates in the same situation as the 77 in Ontario to apply for consideration for a second interim licence until after they challenge the next available clinical exam in March 2021. This decision and direction were taken in the public interest to ensure that the health human resource capacity of the province is optimized especially during this crisis and on the consideration that the risk to the public is low and would, in any event, be mitigated by additional requirements for supervision. The regulatory College in BC is taking a managed risk approach elevating the supervision requirements for those who are successful in their application – each person will need two supervisors and one supervisor has to be physically present when the provisional practitioners are providing care (no remote supervision). These individuals will be allowed to keep interim licencing until May 2021 only and the timing is based on the spring exam being complete in March/April 2021.

We recognize that changes in Ontario would necessitate amendments to Ontario Regulation 532/98, section 23 and not in bylaws as is the case in BC. Nevertheless, the Ontario government has made a number of pandemic-related regulations and regulation amendments in response to the exigencies of the pandemic. We feel there is a case to consider similar changes in Ontario for this situation. We also strongly believe that the College has an excellent track record of risk mitigation and could elevate requirements for provisional practice to address any additional risk as was done in BC. Prior to 2017 the CPO, through their Registration Committee, assessed requests for a second provisional practice registration for those in this very same situation and granted many with no negative outcomes.

These are extraordinary times which will now define the new normal going forward. Where regulation becomes a barrier to meeting the needs of Ontarians and our health system it must be addressed. We request the Council consider introducing changes that both meet the bar for public safety and allow our profession to respond to the challenges of today and the future.



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We would be pleased to work with the Council and the CPO staff team and to help in any way to achieve any necessary changes to enable individuals to be granted a second provisional practice certificate of registration. We look forward to your response to this request and we can be available to meet to further discuss at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. J. Gardiner Millar".

Paulette Gardiner Millar
President

Cc: Mr. Rod Hamilton, Registrar, College of Physiotherapists of Ontario