



January 5, 2021

Hon. Doug Ford,
Premier of Ontario

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy
Ontario Minister of Finance

Via email

RE: Ontario Small Business Support Grant

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Bethlenfalvy,

I am writing to you both on behalf of our members across Ontario who own and operate community-based physiotherapy clinics that have fewer than 100 employees and have experienced more than a 20% year-over-year decline in their revenues since April 2019 because of the pandemic-related restrictions. Health care small businesses face unique challenges during this pandemic. We are requesting that one eligibility criterion, specifically that the business be closed due to shutdown to be eligible for the Ontario Small Business Support Grant be removed, and that physiotherapy clinics that meet all other criteria be eligible to access this critical support at this time.

Physiotherapists provide essential care to Ontarians across the health care delivery system. Small, privately owned, community-based physiotherapy clinics and home care services provide care to those who have recently had surgery, been recently discharged from hospital following a major event such as a stroke or a fall, and keep people living safely within their own homes. Although not required to close by virtue of Regulation 82/20, most businesses have sustained substantial revenue losses as a direct consequence of the shutdowns and public health directives for delivering care safely to the extent that their businesses, and access to care for those who require physiotherapy, are seriously at risk. The precipitous decline in revenues results from any number of pandemic-related factors, including but not limited to:

- Seniors being reluctant or unable to attend a community clinic because of the shutdown provisions and pandemic related concerns;
- The sharp decline in "non-essential" surgeries by hospitals and the following decline in the demand for post-surgical rehabilitation;
- The inability or difficulty of patients to attend physician's or nurse practitioner's clinic to obtain a referral to a community-based clinic as required by some insurance and Ministry funded programs;

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- The (completely necessary) public health requirements that severely limit the number of patients that can be treated in a clinic at any given time (in most cases, the volume of patients has been reduced by 50%);
- The abrupt decline in demand for the rehabilitation of workplace-related injuries and auto accident cases; and
- The reluctance of a segment of the public to access services virtually either due to technological challenges or lack of understanding of the effectiveness of these options.

Many of these clinics, as small businesses, operate with low margins at the best of times and have limited resilience to absorb the precipitous changes they have experienced since the beginning of the pandemic. The reality is, as the pandemic continues, they face increasing financial instability and uncertainty and many are unlikely to survive the repeated shutdowns and restrictions. Employees will have to be dismissed and lessors will go without rental payments. More critically, there will be a decline in access to community-based physiotherapy at a time when Ontarians will need it most post-pandemic.

Accordingly, we urge you to remove the eligibility requirement that a business must be required to close or restrict services subject to the Provincewide Shutdown. Even for those who were or are not required to close, the shutdown has had and will continue to have dramatic and negative follow-on impacts on physiotherapy (and on other community-based healthcare) clinics. If the clinics have met or exceeded the 20% or more revenue decline, they should be able to access help through the Small Business Support Grant.

Rehabilitation is an essential service to Ontarians and many depend on accessing care through small businesses in their communities. Supporting these small businesses will be critical to helping Ontarians and Ontario to be stronger and healthier as we meet and recover from the challenges of this pandemic. We appreciate your consideration of this request and thank you for the work being done on behalf of Ontarians during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

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

Paulette Gardiner Millar
President