



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association

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physiothérapie

WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS IN ADVANCE OF THE 2026 BUDGET

Submitted by the **Canadian Physiotherapy Association**



[physiotherapy.ca](https://www.physiotherapy.ca)

JULY 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To prioritize the health of Canadians, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association recommends that the Government:

1

Creates a nationally unified scope of practice for physiotherapists.

2

Positions physiotherapy professionals as key contributors on the Task Force for Public Health Care Innovation.

3

Provides coverage for pelvic health physiotherapy care to support women's reproductive health, including pre- and post-natal care.

4

Increases the number of physiotherapy education seats in universities by expanding existing programs and funding new ones, particularly for programs that support rural and remote parts of Canada.

5

Increases the number of trained physiotherapy professionals in Canada by investing in attracting and supporting internationally trained professionals.



CAPITALIZING ON AMBITION THROUGH PHYSIOTHERAPY

As Canada strives to position itself as the leading economy among the G7, a critical and evidence-supported pathway to achieving this goal lies in strengthening our primary health-care system by investing in physiotherapy. Expanding access to physiotherapy has the potential to improve health outcomes for millions of Canadians, alleviate pressure on our health-care system, and save the economy billions of dollars each year.^[1]

There are more than 29,000^[2] physiotherapists licensed to practise across the country, over half of whom work in the private sector. Physiotherapists are essential contributors to local economies and small business ecosystems, particularly through community-based clinics. Their work ensures that Canadians remain healthy, active, and engaged in their communities and the workforce following injury or surgery, or during chronic illness.

Physiotherapy functions as both a health-care solution and an economic engine. It contributes to employment, enhances workforce participation and productivity, and plays a pivotal role in reducing the economic burden of illness, which is currently estimated at \$236.3 billion annually.^[3]

Investing in physiotherapy is not only a sound health-care strategy — it is a fiscally responsible policy. It will help alleviate pressures that hinder Canadians' productivity by enabling faster recoveries. To unlock its full potential, a two-pronged approach is required: one that increases access to physiotherapy services nationwide while also expanding the physiotherapy workforce to meet growing demand.





EXPAND ACCESS TO PHYSIOTHERAPY CARE FOR CANADIANS

Canada's shortage of health-care providers^[4], combined with an aging population, is making it increasingly difficult for patients to access timely care. This reality leads to delayed diagnoses, preventable hospital visits, and declining health outcomes.

A recent survey revealed that fewer than half of Canadians rate their local health-care services as "good," and four times as many Canadians say their care is "getting worse" rather than "getting better."^[5,6] The same survey showed that 8 in 10 Canadians believe physiotherapists play a vital role in improving health, citing benefits such as increased mobility and reduced reliance on pain medication.

Access to physiotherapy remains a significant barrier, particularly for people with disabilities. More than a quarter of survey respondents reported that they needed physiotherapy care in the past decade but did not or could not access it. Among persons with disabilities, that figure jumps to 43%.

Paul, a 42-year-old firefighter, developed severe back pain after years of hauling heavy gear and responding to emergencies. Without timely access or coverage for physiotherapy, his pain escalated — disrupting his sleep, limiting mobility, and taking a toll on his mental health. As his discomfort and anxiety grew, Paul was forced onto extended sick leave, straining his crew and pushing him closer to early retirement. The lack of physiotherapy access jeopardized not only his health, but his ability to serve his community safely.

Millions of Canadians are being left without care. Expanding access to physiotherapy — including by ensuring that physiotherapists are included as integral members of primary care teams — would not only increase positive health outcomes, but ease the burden on doctors, nurses, and emergency departments.

We urge the federal government to take three actions to improve access to physiotherapy care:

1

CREATE A NATIONALLY UNIFIED SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

As the federal government works toward one Canadian economy, it must include the health-care economy in that effort. Currently, scope of practice for physiotherapists varies significantly across provinces.^[7] For example, in Quebec, physiotherapists can order x-rays; in Ontario, they cannot. Scope discrepancies also extend to other areas, such as prescribing orthotics, working on emergency department teams, and providing pelvic health physiotherapy.

Aligning and expanding the scope of practice through a national framework will allow physiotherapists to work to their full competencies, regardless of jurisdiction – helping to reduce wait times, enhance productivity, improve interprovincial labour mobility, and modernize public health care.^[8] It will make primary care more accessible, and allow more physiotherapists to work as part of primary care teams in communities across Canada.

To achieve this, physiotherapists must be included in national discussions about interprovincial labour mobility and regulatory changes related to a pan-Canadian licensure model for health-care professionals.

2

INCLUDE PHYSIOTHERAPY PROFESSIONALS ON THE TASK FORCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CARE INNOVATION

The federal government's commitment to establishing a Task Force for Public Health Care Innovation is an important step toward modernizing health care in Canada. To be effective, this task force must include representation from across the full spectrum of primary care providers, including physiotherapy professionals.

Given the profession's measurable impact on health outcomes and the economy, inclusion of physiotherapy leaders will ensure that the task force leverages the full potential of physiotherapy to advance care and reduce system strain.



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3

PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR PELVIC HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPY CARE TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The federal government has committed to investing in women's reproductive health and protecting reproductive rights. Improving funded access to pelvic health physiotherapy is critical to upholding these commitments.^[9]

Some provinces are already taking steps toward expanding access to pelvic health care for Canadians. For example, Prince Edward Island recently launched a pilot program to provide support for Islanders in need of pelvic floor physiotherapy through their Health Innovation Fund.^[10] But awareness of and access to pelvic health physiotherapy services in the public health-care system remain limited and unevenly distributed across communities, further exacerbating inequities.^[11]

We recommend that the federal government collaborate with provinces and territories to provide equitable access to pelvic health physiotherapy for all Canadians, specifically to support pre-natal and post-natal care. Ensuring that Canadians have access to pelvic health physiotherapy is a vital part of reinforcing protections of women's health and aligns directly with commitments made to permanently fund the Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund Program and introduce new invitro fertilization programs.

INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY PROFESSIONALS TO MEET THE OECD AVERAGE

Canada does not have enough physiotherapy professionals to meet current or future demand. Estimates show that there will be a 70% increase in workforce demand for physiotherapists between 2024–2033, with more than 13,000 new jobs being created.^[12]

As more people enter and sustain our economy through roles in the Canadian Armed Forces, health care, first responders, skilled trades, and other essential sectors, expanded access to physiotherapy care will be critical to maintaining current levels of productivity.

Increasing the physiotherapy workforce will not only improve health outcomes, but yield significant economic savings. Physiotherapy already reduces the burden of osteoarthritis, back pain, and coronary heart disease by \$232 million annually. Increasing the supply of physiotherapy to meet the OECD average could reduce that burden by an additional \$144 million across those diseases alone — with the potential for billions in savings across the broader health system.^[13]

To meet the OECD average, Canada would need to increase the number of practising physiotherapists by 62%.^[14] Achieving this goal requires action on two fronts: expanding education capacity and investing in internationally trained professionals.





4

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PHYSIOTHERAPY EDUCATION SEATS IN UNIVERSITIES BY EXPANDING EXISTING PROGRAMS AND FUNDING NEW ONES, FOCUSING ON RURAL AND REMOTE LOCATIONS

Presently, there are sixteen universities in Canada offering professional, entry-level physiotherapy programs at the Master's level. However, education seat funding and capacity in Canadian programs have not kept pace with demand for profession growth, and Canada is not able to train enough physiotherapists to meet current and future needs.^[15]

Working with provinces and territories to expand the overall number of physiotherapy education seats within Canada by providing support for new seats at existing programs or the establishment of new programs — particularly those that serve rural and remote locations — can help address the shortage of physiotherapy professionals in Canada.

There are several universities across Canada that have already shown an interest in building or expanding physiotherapy programs, including York University and the University of Saskatchewan. Providing additional support for initiatives like these could help expedite progress on expanding the number of physiotherapy education seats in Canada.



York's Faculty of Health is developing a new Master's-level program to train the next generation of physiotherapy professionals to serve Canadians' health care needs. We are excited to work with organizations like the Canadian Physiotherapy Association to ensure this program produces future-proofed health-care workers who will immediately be able to enter the workforce and meet the growing needs of Canadians.

— Rhonda Lenton, President & Vice-Chancellor, York University



Clinical placement capacity must grow in parallel with student enrollment in physiotherapy programs. Clinical education is a required component of all physiotherapy programs, but current supervision capacity is limited. The federal government can support the expansion of clinical placement capacity by funding initiatives that increase clinicians' ability to take on student placements.

5

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LICENSED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS IN CANADA BY INVESTING IN INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

Internationally educated physiotherapists already make up a quarter of all physiotherapists across Canada.^[16] Their numbers continue to grow, yet many face barriers to entering the profession in Canada.

The federal government can help attract and integrate internationally educated physiotherapy professionals by:

- **Streamlining credential recognition** for internationally trained physiotherapists.
- **Providing grants and bursaries** for Canadians who studied abroad to return and practise in Canada.
- **Incentivizing practise in underserved areas** through targeted programs that, like the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness initiative, are aimed at attracting and retaining internationally trained physiotherapists.
- **Funding bridging programs** that aim to accelerate the path to practise for internationally trained physiotherapists. One way to expedite progress on this initiative would be to use existing programs, such as the Internationally Educated Physiotherapist Credential Assessment and Education Bursary Program in British Columbia, as models.^[17]



FROM AMBITION TO OPPORTUNITY

Physiotherapy is already playing a key role in driving health outcomes and economic growth in Canada. With the right investments, that role can be dramatically expanded — delivering measurable cost savings, relieving pressure on an overwhelmed system, and improving quality of life for millions of Canadians.

Expanding access to physiotherapy and investing in increasing the physiotherapy workforce are practical, achievable steps that will enhance Canada's health-care system, boost productivity, and support long-term economic growth.

Physiotherapy professionals already move communities. But with the right support, they can help keep Canada strong — by contributing to one Canadian economy, reducing the amount the government is spending on operations, helping to educate and attract the best talent in the world, and building a stronger Canadian health-care system.

ABOUT THE CANADIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) represents physiotherapy professionals, including registered physiotherapists, physiotherapist assistants, physiotherapy technologists, and students across Canada. Physiotherapy professionals provide essential expertise, rehabilitative care, and treatment, enabling Canadians to live well and actively participate in all facets of their lives.

For more information, please contact:

Gary Stordy
Director, Advocacy
gstordy@physiotherapy.ca



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