

**April 17, 2020**

**Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A2**

**Re: Mobilizing Home Health Care During COVID-19**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

First of all, thank you for continued efforts to support us and all of those working tirelessly to support the health of Canadians during this pandemic.

We are writing you as our sector grapples with the challenges we face today as well as looking ahead to the future waves of infection over the next 12–18 months. There are significant health human resource challenges impacting the sector and it is our recommendation that the federal government, through provinces and territories, invest to better support health home care workers. Frail elderly and individuals with chronic disease, those at greater risk of acquiring COVID-19, hospitals and long-term care facilities are high risk settings to receive care. Throughout this crisis, home health care has continued to be an essential service for older adults living with frailty, people with complex, chronic disabling conditions, and individuals at the end of life.

The Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA) appreciates the federal government considering a temporary top up to the salaries of low-income workers. However, we feel strongly that the following elements need to be implemented in order to achieve maximum benefits to retain essential unregulated home health care workers:

- **The top up program must be designed as an employer subsidy** that includes unregulated home health care workers providing essential services during COVID-19. The program should incentivize employers to offer full time work - 37.5 hrs / week @\$23.50 / hr (i.e. maximum of \$3,525.00 / month for a designated timeframe) – to unregulated home health care providers delivering home based services deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19. For context, hourly compensation for unregulated home health workers currently ranges from \$16.50 - \$19.00 / hour while compensation in long-term care facilities ranges from \$22.00 - \$24.00 and hospitals from \$25.00 - \$28.00.
- **The program should be administered through provincial / territorial governments** and should enable resources to be directed to supporting care for frail seniors and other populations that are vulnerable to COVID-19 in their homes where the chances of transmission of the virus are lower.

As the pandemic evolves, it is clear that governments will seek to mobilize the clinical expertise of home health care providers in order to provide health care in the home setting as a proactive strategy that will help mitigate and control the spread and impact of COVID-19. Leveraging home health care will support hospital discharge and “decanting” strategies (to build surge capacity) and provide alternatives to long-term facility-based care for over 3 million Canadians, including 1.2 million frail seniors.

However, the following challenges are hindering effective home health care in its ability to respond to the needs of those requiring home care during this pandemic:

- **Consistent Employment of Unregulated Health Care Workers:** 20-25% of unregulated home health care workers (personal support workers) who earn less than \$2,000 / month are choosing to decline visits and instead access the CERB.
- **Home Health Care is an Essential Service:** Lack of clarity on the designation of home health care as an essential service and therefore supported by public health funding.
- **Access to PPE:** A widespread shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other necessary supplies to ensure effective infection control and limit the spread of the virus during care delivery. As an essential service, access to appropriate PPE for home health care workers is critical.
- **Caregiver Burden:** Cancellation of visits for clients designated as “non-urgent needs” (complex but stable health needs or requiring support to live safely) is creating stress on families and caregivers as they grapple to provide necessary support and care. This is further exacerbated by the cancellation of respite services for caregivers.

These are the core challenges the sector is experiencing at this time. CHCA would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you or your Ministers and staff about these challenges and our recommendations to address them.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.



Nadine Henningsen, CEO

Canadian Home Care Association

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CC:

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister of Canada & Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister of Seniors

Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance

Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister of Labour

Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development & Disability Inclusion

Honourable Patricia Hadju, Minister of Health

**The Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA)** is a national non-profit association dedicated to strengthening integrated community-based care. Through our diverse membership, the CHCA represents public and private organizations that fund, administer, and provide health care services in the home and community care sector. We advance a vision of integrated home and community-based care that provides seamless patient- and family-centred care that is accessible, accountable, evidence-informed, and sustainable.