



June 9, 2020

Attention: Brain Pallister
Premier of Manitoba

Re: Manitoba Risk Recognition Program

Dear Premier,

The Manitoba Society of Occupational Therapists (MSOT) plays a vital role in building, promoting and strengthening the profession of Occupational Therapy in Manitoba. Occupational Therapists work in diverse areas within our healthcare system, and have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis empowering people to overcome challenges, facilitating timely hospital discharges, adapting to frequent changes in policy and procedure, and in some cases being redeployed to assist at Covid-19 screening clinics and drive-thru sites. Occupational Therapists have continued to provide essential care and services during this pandemic and have had to face the associated risks.

MSOT is pleased that the provincial government is publicly and financially recognizing the risks and challenges of being on the front lines of health care during this pandemic, however we would like to highlight some concerns with the model of the Risk Recognition Program. Through these challenging times we have been encouraged and reminded that we are in this together, but we feel the Risk Recognition Program is overly complicated, inconsistent, and could be very divisive. We feel everyone on the front line is at equal risk of exposure and negative consequences associated with increased stress, fear, and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our concern is that the outlined employment income would make many Occupational Therapists ineligible, even though they are included on the list of eligible positions. Furthermore, the program's complicated criteria could mean that a part-time worker may qualify when a full-time worker in the same profession, at the same pay rate would not. These inconsistencies are causing confusion among Occupational Therapists who are asking why they are being told they are eligible when in reality they are not eligible, and why the Manitoba Government isn't recognizing the risks they have taken.

All frontline workers are at equal risk of exposure to COVID-19, including Occupational Therapists. All frontline workers deserve some recognition of the risks and additional stress and pressures they have experienced providing frontline essential service during the pandemic. Last week, the Winnipeg Free Press reported that you are considering expanding the criteria for the Risk Recognition Program. MSOT is asking that all Occupational Therapists on the frontlines be included and that the increased risks they have faced during this pandemic be recognized.

Yours sincerely,

Naomi Hatherly, O.T. Reg. (MB)
MSOT Co-chair of Current Affairs and Professional Advocacy
(msot.caandadvocacy@gmail.com)

Randi Vandale, O.T. Reg. (MB)
MSOT President
(msot.president@gmail.com)

Heidi Garcia, O.T. Reg. (MB)
MSOT Executive Officer (executiveofficer@msot.mb.ca)

CC: Finance Minister Scott Fielding; Health Minister Cameron Friesen