



March 31, 2020

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Building  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

RE: Economic measures during COVID-19

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO), the national voice of optometrists in Canada, I'd like to commend the Government of Canada for its quick action to help Canadians facing hardship as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, based on analysis we received from an accounting firm, we have identified perceived gaps in the economic response plan that have a negative impact on optometrists. We are asking the government to consider amendments to the legislation to make the current benefits more accessible to optometrists.

In the first instance, the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) does not apply to the majority of self-employed optometrists who lose income when they stay open to respond to emergencies, which while alleviating pressure on hospital emergency rooms, are not numerous in nature. Doing so in the absence of financial support is not economically feasible.

Secondly, the CERB doesn't apply to optometrists who are incorporated and receive their income exclusively through dividends.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the economic response package to include optometrists who wish to provide emergency patient care during the COVID-19 outbreak, without suffering undue economic hardship. We encourage the Federal Government to re-examine the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit and look for a solution that supports ongoing contribution of care delivery by optometrists and other regulated health care professionals practicing primarily in the private sector during these exceptional circumstances.

CAO welcomes the opportunity to discuss this issue with your staff in greater detail. A member of my staff will contact your office to arrange appropriate follow up.



Again, thank you and your government for your efforts to date.

Sincerely,

François Couillard, CEO  
Canadian Association of Optometrists

cc. The Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance  
Terry Duguid, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development  
Hon. Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta  
Hon. John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia  
Hon. Brian Pallister, Premier of Manitoba  
Hon. Blaine Higgs, Premier of New Brunswick  
Hon. Dwight Ball, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Hon. Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia  
Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
Hon. Dennis King, Premier of Prince Edward Island  
Hon. François Legault, Premier of Quebec  
Hon. Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan  
Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Premier of Northwest Territories  
Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Premier of Nunavut  
Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier of Yukon  
Carol Hughes, MP, Asst. Deputy Speaker  
Pierre Poilievre, MP, Conservative Finance Critic  
Peter Julien, MP, NDP Finance Critic

Ministerial Cabinet Committee on Covid-19

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Chair)  
Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Vice-Chair)  
Hon. Navdeep Singh Bains  
Hon. William Sterling Blair  
Hon. Patricia Hajdu  
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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS  
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