



TRANSITIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE  
— COLLEGE OF —  
**MASSAGE THERAPISTS**  
— OF ALBERTA —



**CERTIFIED REGISTERED**  
Massage Therapist Association



**Natural Health Practitioners of Canada**  
**Praticiens de la Santé Naturelle du Canada**

January 8, 2021

Honourable Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta  
Honourable Tyler Sandro, Minister of Health  
Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health

In the province of Alberta there are four member associations that represent Massage Therapists:

1. The Natural Health Practitioners of Canada (NHPC),
2. The Canadian Massage and Manual Osteopathic Therapists Association (CMMOTA),
3. The Massage Therapists Association of Alberta (MTAA), and
4. The Certified Registered Massage Therapists of Alberta (CRMTA)

The massage therapist member associations perform a dual role; member services, and quasi-regulator for 9,000 therapists in Alberta. All associations have come together and signed the updated application for regulation which has been in the hands of the Government since September 4, 2020 and is enclosed for your reference.

For the purpose of regulating the health profession of massage therapy the above-named associations have been working together with the Transitional Council for the College of Massage Therapists (TC-CMTA) toward regulation and have created a collaborative group. The Transitional Council for the College of Massage Therapists is the representative council spearheading the application for regulation of



Massage Therapy in Alberta and was appointed as lead in 2020 by the Government of Alberta and has been enclosed for your reference.

The draft schedule that has been submitted by the TC-CMTA in June 2020 has been agreed upon by all the Massage Associations, CMMOTA, NHPC, MTAA & CRMTA which includes the practice statement and protected titles that is required to being the consultation process.

The consultative process of the TC-CMTA, which was vetted by Alberta Health, has been open, transparent, inclusive, and collaborative. All four massage associations have participated. The following documents were circulated to all four Massage Therapist associations in Alberta for their input:

- The Application; and
- Draft Schedule; and
- Code of Ethics; and
- Standards of Practice.

These documents have all been in the hands of the Government as amended since August 2020.

In the absence of Alberta Government regulation, each association holds their members to standards similar to those typically required by regulated health professions. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Standards of Practice
- Abiding to a Code of ethics
- Educational requirements
- Liability Insurance
- Continuing education
- Complaints process

*Typically massage therapists provide on average twenty treatments per week. That is a 180,000 treatments per week. At an average cost of \$100.00 per treatment, massage therapy generates at least \$18 Million per week.*

During the pandemic, the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and other provinces where massage therapy is unregulated, have allowed the safe practice of massage based on membership, in good standing, with a recognized association. We ask Alberta Health Services (AHS) to consider following the lead of other provinces until such time as the Government includes massage therapy as a regulated health profession under the Alberta Health Act.



*Albertans pay for their own massage healthcare benefits and are experiencing anxiety due to the additional bureaucratic process the government has placed on them to access care provided by massage therapists they need during this pandemic.*

The TC-CMTA and the four massage associations have approved a joint COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Manual for massage therapists in Alberta that meets the regulated health profession standard which came into effect January 4, 2021.

Since many massage therapists work in physiotherapy and chiropractic clinics, the IPC manual meets the same regulated health profession standards required of physiotherapists and chiropractors.

In the most recent exemption order of the AHS, clients require a recommendation from a regulated health professional. We are concerned that the people who need massage are having to spend an additional \$50 to \$200 on what may or may not be an uninsured expense to obtain a referral or prescription before they can access their massage treatment. We are also hearing that regulated health professionals are receiving requests for referrals at an alarming rate. This process is very bureaucratic and unnecessary as massage therapists that belong to a recognized massage association have been practicing safely for many years.

*Extended health insurers provide benefits that include massage therapy without a referral or prescription for massage treatments from massage therapy members of all the recognized associations in Alberta.*

The TC-CMTA has some additional concerns with the current exemption order for massage requiring a prescription or referral from a regulated health professional as it leaves the door open to public risks the government may be unaware of. Anyone who obtains a prescription or referral is permitted to attend any personal service provider who may provide massage as part of their services with no oversight by a governing body to meet the health profession standard or enforce safety standards. We have heard of hairdressers offering foot rubs with a referral, and it does not prevent anyone who obtains a prescription or referral to seek sexual services from a body rub establishment. This is because body rub establishments are licensed as non-accredited massage with those municipalities who provide these types of business licenses. The conditions of the most recent exemption order makes enforcement, to protect and serve the public's best interest, difficult.

In the interest of public safety, it is in the government's best interest to specifically recognize and permit massage therapists, who are members in good standing with one of the four massage associations (CMMOTA, CRMTA, MTAA & NHPC), to return to normal massage therapy practice during restrictions, the same as physiotherapist and chiropractors. During restrictions this would apply only to massage therapy and does not include other modalities such as reflexology, body wraps or spa treatments. Therapists in good standing with the four associations are held accountable to a health profession standard shared by the associations, that includes the joint IPC manual. These massage therapists should not be required to



have their clients obtain a prescription or referral to be able to provide an essential healthcare service during restrictions since they are held accountable by their association. Permitting a return to normal practice will allow Albertans full access to this essential healthcare service in a safe and responsible manner while at the same time keeping massage therapists employed instead of relying on financial supports which they may or may not qualify for. Recognizing only members in good standing from one of the four massage associations will keep the door closed on body rub establishments and personal service providers who are not held accountable by a governing body to the higher healthcare profession standard, thereby ensuring public safety during this pandemic.

This letter confirms that, the Transitional Council for the College of Massage Therapists of Alberta (TC-CMTA), the Canadian Massage and Manual Osteopathic Therapists Association (CMMOTA), the Natural Health Practitioners of Canada (NHPC), the Massage Therapists Association of Alberta (MTAA), and The Certified Registered Massage Therapists of Alberta (CRMTA) are committed to working together to regulate the massage profession in Alberta. We have been waiting to be added to the legislative agenda and would like to see government support regulation by introducing massage to legislation in either the spring or the fall sitting of the legislature. We strongly feel that the public outcry which we witnessed with the closure of massage therapy in December 2020 is evidence that the public would like to see massage therapy regulated in the province of Alberta and we are prepared to work together towards that outcome at the soonest possible opportunity. The TC-CTMA, who is working closely with the associations, highly recommends that the government consults with us prior to making decisions regarding the massage profession.

Sincerely,

Christy Kasur, President  
Transitional Council for the College of Massage Therapists of Alberta

Heather Goddard, Executive Director  
Canadian Massage and Manual Osteopathic Therapists Association

Tendai Nzuma, Chief Executive Officer  
Natural Health Practitioners of Canada Association



Lindsay Petersen, Chair  
Massage Therapists Association of Alberta

Bob Cross, President  
Certified Registered Massage Therapist Association

Attachments:

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual

Renewed Joint Application September 4, 2020

2020 Letter from the government recognizing the TC-CMTA as lead and president as  
spokesperson for regulation of massage therapists in Alberta.