



For Immediate Release

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BC's Occupational Therapists Encouraged by BC Health Committee Report

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists- BC Chapter (CAOT-BC) is very encouraged by the BC Select Standing Committee on Health's report [Looking Forward: Improving Rural Health Care, Primary Care, and Addiction Recovery Programs.](#)

The report explores options for delivering better care for rural British Columbians and it specifically recommends enhancing support for interdisciplinary teams, creating a more patient-focused health care delivery system. Occupational therapists play a key role on those interdisciplinary teams, helping patients with injuries, illness or disabilities maintain their independence.

"CAOT-BC has been concerned about a shortage of occupational therapists (OTs) in British Columbia for many years since supply has not kept pace with demand as the population ages," said Giovanna Boniface, National Director of Professional Affairs of CAOT. "The shortage of occupational therapist is a province-wide issue but the problem is more acute in rural areas."

Approximately 75 per cent of BC's occupational therapy workforce is trained outside the province. Limited funding means just 48 students graduate from the UBC Faculty of Medicine, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy program every year. It is the smallest English speaking occupational therapy program in Canada, despite BC having the third largest population behind Ontario and Quebec.

"We believe it is imperative to increase the supply of occupational therapists trained in BC in order to reduce our reliance on in-migration from other parts of Canada and around the world," added Boniface.

Other organizations support the need for more access to occupational therapy including the BC Office of the Seniors Advocate. Its [report](#) indicated that more than 90% of seniors who live in residential care do not receive the required minimum of 15 minutes of occupational therapy care every seven days. The BC Care Providers Association report, ["Strengthening Seniors Care: A Made-in-BC Roadmap"](#), says the overall quality of life and care of seniors would be improved with more occupational and other therapies. Inclusion BC's report ["Kids Can't Wait"](#) found there are excessive wait times for early intervention services provided by OTs. Pain BC has repeatedly called for more access to allied health services such as occupational therapy to support British Columbians who live with chronic pain as the province grapples with the opioid crisis.

CAOT-BC endorses Select Standing Committee on Health's recommendation to "develop and implement a comprehensive, long-term health human resources plan" and we are ready to work with government to be part of the solution.

About Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapists are integral parts of interdisciplinary teams, and offer practice and interventions that complement and enhance a team-based model of care. Investment in occupational therapy enables British Columbians living with injury, illness and/or disability to maintain their abilities and independence so they can remain healthy, happy, and independent.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Boniface", is centered on a light green rectangular background.

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