



CANADIAN SOCIETY OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES THÉRAPEUTES RESPIRATOIRES

March 20, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Re: Respiratory Therapists on the Front Lines of Canada's COVID-19 Response

Dear Prime Minister:

We would like to take this opportunity to commend the federal government on its well-coordinated response regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, including plans outlined in your announcement today that the federal government will scale up and modify Canadian manufacturing processes to increase the availability of medical supplies. The Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists (CSRT) stands ready to help.

The CSRT is the voice for Canada's growing community of respiratory therapists. The CSRT advocates for respiratory therapists, patients and families, and for the respiratory therapy profession in local communities, across Canada, and globally.

Canadian respiratory therapists are an essential part of the frontlines of Canada's healthcare response to COVID-19. Today, over 12,000 respiratory therapists are providing safe and effective critical care to Canadians of all ages. They are experts in the management of ventilators and in airway management. They are essential members of our health care workforce, working alongside doctors, nurses and other interprofessional colleagues to assure safe and effective respiratory care for those affected during this time of unprecedented challenge.

The CSRT is increasingly being made aware of the concerns of respiratory therapists across the country regarding the impacts COVID-19 is having on the care they are able to provide to Canadians. In particular:

- significant justified concern over scarcity of critical healthcare resources, including possible shortfalls in the numbers of ventilators available to provide care;
- the potential scarcity of the necessary protective gear to provide care, such as masks, and the impact this could have on critical health human resources, including respiratory therapists;

- the potential that respiratory therapists may expose their families to COVID-19 after having worked on the front lines.

These concerns are important and require urgent attention. The CSRT certainly appreciates the substantial efforts of the Federal Government to address concerns related to procurement of medical equipment including ventilators. The CSRT and Canadian respiratory therapists are well positioned to assist the government in this regard.

We recommend that respiratory therapists be consulted as procurement strategies are instituted, particularly with respect to efforts for emergency manufacturing of ventilators. Respiratory therapists have the expertise in mechanical ventilation necessary to effectively contribute to these processes, and to ensure products meet the needs of the healthcare providers who will employ them.

It is imperative that respiratory therapists be well informed and appropriately equipped to effectively respond to the pandemic. From the outset, the CSRT has prioritized supporting the practice of respiratory therapists by hosting a relevant and timely repository of information on COVID-19. We have also established a national discussion forum for all members to share innovative ideas about evolving practice issues related to COVID-19. In a time when health professionals are being inundated with information of varying degrees of reliability, we recognize that it is crucial that they have a trusted source for accessing reliable and relevant information.

On behalf of the CSRT, I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration of the serious concerns and recommendations outlined in this letter. Should you like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Andrew West, CEO
Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists

Cc: Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of Cabinet Committee on COVID-19 Response

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health

Navdeep Bains
Minister of Education and Science

Anita Anand
Minister of Public Services and Procurement

Dr. Theresa Tam
Chief Public Health Officer, Public Health Agency of Canada