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July 12, 2017

To The Honourable Kelvin Goertzen , Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, Province of Manitoba,

The Manitoba Society of Occupational Therapists (MSOT) is the association that represents the professional interests of occupational therapists working within Manitoba. MSOT advocates for occupational therapists at a local, provincial, and national level.

Our profession is dedicated to assisting clients to overcome barriers that prevent them from being functional in daily tasks they need to do, whether the barriers be caused by physical changes from degenerative conditions, strokes, trauma or the like, to cognitive changes related to brain injury or dementia, as well as changes to mental status due to depression, anxiety, or mood disorders. Although a limited list, we seek to show the breadth of assessment and intervention areas where occupational therapists intervene. Occupational therapists use a number of approaches to meet individuals needs including assessment (e.g. physical/motor, cognitive), intervention programs (e.g. cognitive, behavioural, mental health), adapt and introduce new ways to do things, modify the environment with accessible design and ergonomic solutions, prescribe assistive devices such as wheelchairs, consult with families and caregivers, and connect with community resources.

MSOT Board of Directors would like to express our sincere disappointment in the deletion of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's (WRHA) Occupational Therapy Regional Director position. We are concerned that occupational therapy was the only allied health profession to lose our Regional Director within the WRHA, and the implications this has for the voice of occupational therapy in our province. Occupational therapy is no longer represented at a leadership level within the WRHA.

Manitoba has been a leader in the development and advancement of occupational therapy as a direct result of the dedication and leadership provided by the WRHA Occupational Therapy Regional Director position. This position provided a voice for occupational therapists across the province, not just within the region. The Occupational Therapy Regional Director provided mentorship and supervision to various occupational therapists, clinical service leaders, and managers. In addition, the Occupational Therapy Regional Director spent decades developing relationships within the WRHA, provincially, and nationally, which have ultimately been lost with the deletion of this position.

Additionally, MSOT was shocked to hear about the cuts to outpatient occupational therapy across the WRHA as part of the manage to budget initiatives. These cuts will have a major impact on the health and well-being of Manitobans. Many insurance plans do not cover occupational therapy services and Manitobans will be required to pay out of pocket for private occupational therapy services, which many simply cannot afford. We are concerned for those who do not meet criteria for the vulnerable persons exception, but will still struggle to pay and navigate to access appropriate service.

Research has shown that the role of occupational therapy has both cost saving effectiveness and benefits to client health outcomes. As such, occupational therapy is an integral part of the health care system. We are concerned that these changes will compromise the care we provide to Manitoban's and ultimately make it challenging for individuals to access essential occupational therapy services.

MSOT Board of Directors and Executive Officer would like to discuss this further and welcomes a response to this letter. Please feel free to contact us at [msot@msot.mb.ca](mailto:msot@msot.mb.ca) at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Alana Maertins, O.T. Reg. (MB) & Esther Hawn, O.T. Reg. (MB)  
President & President-Elect  
Manitoba Society of Occupational Therapists (MSOT)

enabling ability