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IMPACT OF HST APRIL 2009 NEWSLETTER

THE NEW HARMONIZED SALES TAX that's coming into effect in July next year is going to affect the cost of a lot of things in our lives, including the cost of massage therapy services. I thought I would share with you (below) what the Ontario Massage Therapy Association (OMTA) is working on, including a prepared letter you can send to the Premier and Minister of Finance in protest of the tax on massage therapy. I think the word "detrimental" is a more appropriate word than "harm", but whatever ... you get the idea.

SUPPORT THE MASSAGE THERAPY PROFESSION

As a colleague within the profession of massage therapy, or as a patient/friend of a Registered Massage Therapist, we want you to be aware of the impact of the recent announcement from the Minister of Finance to harmonize Ontario's retail sales tax with the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST). This change will result in the application of a 13% tax to the services of a Registered Massage Therapy. This will cause harm to both patients and RMTs.

HARM TO PATIENTS

Massage therapy is not covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), instead, these services are paid directly by patients, either out-of-pocket or through their extended health benefit programs. The introduction of HST will mean that:

- *By adding the 8% tax, given that massage therapy is already taxed under the federal Goods and Services Tax, Ontarians will be paying more for health care services, either from their own income or through their extended health benefit plan;*
- *With less funding available, patients will be forced to reduce the frequency with which they seek treatment, both for injuries and on-going preventive health care, or eliminate these services entirely;*
- *This reduction in services will cause a direct impact on the health and well-being of many Ontarians and, in the long term, will affect Government spending in other areas of health care.*

HARM TO RMTS

The reduction in the funds patients have available, either individually or through an extended health benefit plan, will result in a reduction in services sought by Ontarians. The profession is already facing significant economic distress. The introduction of the HST will mean that:

- *RMTs will face increased economic difficulties operating their practices as the available funding for massage therapy is reduced and therefore patients seek fewer or no services;*



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- *The economic downturn, coupled with the recently announced increase in annual registration fees from the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario, an increase that is necessary in order to sustain the self-regulatory model, will only serve to make matters worse for many RMTs;*
- *The inability of the profession to sustain itself will result in fewer massage therapists and an inability of the profession to maintain the regulatory structures.*

TAKE ACTION NOW!

Massage Therapists are regulated under Ontario's Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) and they are a valuable part of the health care regime for Ontarians, both in terms of the rehabilitative and preventative nature of the practice. Its time for Ontarians and RMTs to stand up together and let your voice be heard by the Ontario Government.

Please, please, please take the time to send a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Finance. For your convenience, I've attached an OMTA link that takes you directly to a pre-drafted letter. All you have to do is input your information and press "send message"

<http://www.oma.com/default.asp?ID=1766> . The majority of this newsletter has been taken from that page, so to find the letter you need, just look for this privacy assurance at the bottom of the OMTA page:

Let Your Voice be Heard!

Please note: Your contact information is being recorded to ensure the legitimacy of this Call for Action. By completing this Call for Action, you are consenting to the collection of this information by the OMTA and its disclosure to the Premier of Ontario and Minister of Finance. This disclosure is necessary in order for the Government of Ontario to recognize that the comments are coming from a real resident of Ontario and not fabricated individuals. The OMTA will retain this contact information for a period of 3 months and will not disclose the information any further than noted above. The information will not be used for any other purpose by the OMTA.

I completely disagree with "harmonizing" the taxes period, but having to add 8% to my rates to pass onto my clients makes me absolutely *CRINGE!* It's just another freakin' pick pocket money grab by the government. In the meantime and with your help, I say we fight, argue and protest the tax on massage therapy services – who knows, maybe it will work and they'll actually exempt this service! I'll have a hard copy petition in my office as an alternative for anyone who doesn't wish to do the link / email way.

PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO ANYONE YOU KNOW WHO USES MASSAGE THERAPY SERVICES ON A REGULAR BASIS.