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**RE: Application for Regulation of Alberta's Certified Athletic Therapists under the Health Professions Act.**

Dear

I am submitting this letter on behalf of the Alberta Athletic Therapists Association (AATA). The purpose of this letter is to increase awareness in the application for regulation of Certified Athletic Therapists in the Province of Alberta, under the Health Professions Act (HPA).

Athletic Therapy is a profession devoted to the health and wellness of the general population, with a specialized interest in the active individual. Given the focused nature of our services, we are requesting recognition and protection under the HPA.

Alberta presently has 175 Certified Athletic Therapists (CAT(C)) working in a variety of medical and therapeutic settings across the province. Athletic Therapists must fulfill academic and practical requirements as governed by the Canadian Athletic Therapists Association, as well as undergo stringent education and testing standards in order to certify at the national level. Pre-certification students interested in Athletic Therapy can choose to enroll in the Advanced Athletic Therapy Certificate at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, which houses one of seven nationally accredited Athletic Therapy programs and graduates approximately thirty students per year.



Athletic Therapists (not to be confused with the term “trainer”) possess a unique set of skills that separate this profession from many others in the industry. Athletic Therapists treat Alberta’s athletes – from recreational to professional, as well as the injured worker.

The scope of practice of an Athletic Therapist is distinguished by a clinical and field role. Clinically, Athletic Therapists provide expertise in musculoskeletal assessment which allows for a comprehensive and consistent care from injury to safe and full return to activity in all areas of life.

In the field, Athletic Therapists provide pre-hospital medical emergency care at an Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) level, concussion assessment and management, develop and manage firm return to play guidelines for safe return to activity, as well as immediate care and reconditioning of musculoskeletal injuries and illnesses. We also provide an unbiased, objective perspective to help educate patients (and organizations) on minimizing the risk of further injuries/illnesses.

A Certified Athletic Therapist specializes in:

- First responder emergency on-site management of injuries and illnesses;
- Emergency action plan development;
- Emergency sport equipment removal;
- Prophylactic or supportive technique application;
- Protective sports equipment selection, fitting, and repair;
- Concussion assessment and management;
- Strength and conditioning programs;
- Nutritional advice;
- Musculoskeletal, postural, and ergonomic assessments;
- Gait analysis;
- Manual therapy techniques;
- Progressive exercise rehabilitation;
- Prevention, assessment, and management of musculoskeletal injuries and medical emergencies;
- Recognition and management of acute traumatic neurological dysfunction;
- Return-to-play decisions using sport specific functional testing.

In addition, the University of Calgary employs Athletic Therapists as “Non-Physician Experts” working in a team-based multi-disciplinary environment at the Calgary Acute Knee Injury Clinic (C-AKIC). A first in Canada, the C-AKIC is a primary care non-referral based service for patients suffering acute knee injuries. Patients do not require a family physician referral to receive a consult. After booking an appointment online, patients are assessed by Non-Physician Experts (i.e. Certified Athletic Therapists) who work alongside sport medicine physicians and orthopaedic surgeons to determine the most appropriate and effective course of treatment. Decision pathways include rehabilitation and/or physical therapy, orthopaedic referral, and surgery, if appropriate. This clinic has demonstrated significant reduction in wait times and has proven to be cost-effective.


The skilled assessment capabilities of Athletic Therapists have demonstrated a reduction in the overconsumption of expensive diagnostic tests (e.g., MRI) which are typically ordered by non-orthopaedic physician specialists for routine injury evaluation and management. These outcomes shows promise for broader applicability as our aging population will increase demand for orthopaedic assessment and post-operative rehabilitation (Calgary Herald January 27, 2011 “U of C Knee Clinic Uses Innovative Online Screening to Bypass Long Waits” by Lea Storry).

Currently, Certified Athletic Therapists and the profession of Athletic Therapy are not regulated under the Alberta Health Professions Act. However, Athletic Therapy is self-regulated under the AATA and the Canadian Athletic Therapists Association's (CATA) licensing policies, procedures and ethics (Provincial and national self-governing documents are available at [www.aata.ca](http://www.aata.ca) and [www.athletictherapy.org](http://www.athletictherapy.org)). Regulation under the Alberta's Health Professions Act means Certified Athletic Therapists would be recognized as a viable clinical option for musculoskeletal health care in Alberta, and will ensure appropriate medical care is provided in organized sports.

Provincial initiatives are underway in Ontario, and British Columbia. Quebec is the first province in Canada to have Athletic Therapy and Certified Athletic Therapists regulated under their provincial HPA, with Ontario not far behind in this process. Alberta can continue to be a health care leader by regulating Athletic Therapy, which will facilitate rapid return to work, sport, and activities of daily living for Albertans while helping to manage health care costs.

Over the past 5 years, the AATA has received direction with respect to our quest for regulation from Provincial Ombudsman Gordon Button, College of Dentistry's Executive Director/Registrar Dr. Gordon Thompson, Calgary MLA Kyle Fawcett, and both Karel Bennet and Donna Carlson of the Ministry of Health and Wellness Workforce Development and Planning. The AATA has aligned its governance with all other regulated professions currently regulated in Alberta's HPA.

Athletic Therapists are ready to meaningfully contribute their expertise and skills in the areas of assessment and rehabilitation of orthopaedic injuries. This will directly address health care skill shortages and therefore reduce access to care wait times as described in the "2014 Health Care Workforce Task Force" and the "Alberta 5 Year Action Plan for Healthcare".

I welcome the opportunity to further correspond with your ministry. If you have  any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at

Your time and attention to this request is very much appreciated. I look forward to speaking with you soon to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully yours,

