



CFMTA/FCAPM COVID-19 BULLETIN #2

The Officers of CFMTA/FCAPM have been working hard to ensure our voices are heard during this difficult time. We asked member RMTs from coast to coast to coast to let us know your concerns. The responses have provided us with a Canada-wide picture of how we are doing.

To that end, CFMTA/FCAPM President Laureen Kells recently sent this letter to the Prime Minister, reminding him of the unique and often precarious situation we as music teachers find ourselves in. Copies of this letter were sent to all party leaders, as well as the Minister of Finance, Bill Morneau.

To: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Since 1935 the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Associations (CFMTA) has worked to bring quality music education to Canadian students. Like many self-employed Canadians, our 3200 members are facing unprecedented challenges in the way we provide our services due to the restrictions imposed by the government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the best efforts of some of our teachers to provide lessons using on-line platforms such as Skype, Facetime and Zoom, not all students are able to participate in their regular weekly lesson. This may be due to a poor internet signal, a lack of required equipment or the financial constraints of our students' families. This reduction in student enrolment has resulted in a serious loss of income for the private music teachers across Canada. In a recent survey of our members, 74% of respondents report being concerned about their current financial situation while 81% report they do not qualify for the CERB benefits as currently offered. This is in part due to the stipulation that one must be unemployed and receiving no pay for a minimum of 14 days in order to qualify:

- "If you are submitting for the first time, that you have stopped or will stop working for reasons related to COVID-19 for at least 14 consecutive days within the 4-week benefit period" (Government of Canada website)

This stipulation is most unfair to those teachers who are seeking to continue offering lessons to a reduced number of students. Further, in this context our government is penalizing teachers who seek to continue as many weekly lessons as possible while still experiencing a considerable loss of income.

The Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Associations respectfully requests the following:

1. *That the government realize that many teachers, in continuing to offer music lessons, are providing a much-needed sense of normalcy and continuity in the lives of students.*
2. *That the government discontinue the policy that prevents teachers from accessing much needed funds simply because they aren't willing to abandon all their students.*
3. *That Canadian music teachers not be penalized for offering a vital service to Canadian music students who seek to continue their musical education in these trying times.*
4. *That financial consideration be given to those music teachers who are continuing to offer weekly lessons.*
5. *That the government expand the guidelines to allow for a teacher to continue to teach music, yet still receive CERB benefits.*

It is a well-known fact that exposure to the arts has many benefits socially, academically and not least importantly, psychologically. By reaching out to Canadian music teachers and their families the government will show its support of arts education and those who provide it in Canada.

The Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Association asks that the Government of Canada consider our proposal to include benefits for our struggling music teachers across Canada. We look forward to being of service and offer our support to help in putting forward those financial benefits for those who most need it.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully yours,

*Laureen Kells, P/E Ped Lic. CNCM, RMT,
President of CFMTA*

UPDATES TO CERB

Updates to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit are occurring on a daily basis. The following is a portion of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Coronavirus Update as of April 15, 2020 which has information pertinent to those of us in the gig economy:

In March, our government introduced the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. This measure is part of a plan that we put in place to ensure that everyone can receive the necessary help to come through this difficult period. Millions of Canadians have already received the benefit, but we know that many other people were not eligible. And yet they still need help. So today we will be relaxing the criteria to allow even more Canadians to benefit from it.

If you earn a thousand dollars a month or less, you can now receive the Canada Emergency Response Benefit because many people do not work as many hours as before, and others must adjust to the reality of contract or gig work.

Source: <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/trudeaus-daily-coronavirus-update-on-the-tragedy-in-nursing-homes-governments-must-do-better-full-transcript/>

As independent business owners, it is important to stay informed regarding changes to the CERB. Government information on this program can be found by going to:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>

This information is current as of 1:00 Eastern Time on April 15, 2020:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/cerb-emergency-benefits-trudeau-1.5532767>

SURVEY RESPONSES

The following are the results of the survey included in the April 1st edition of Of Note. Thank you to all who participated.

1. Are you concerned about your financial situation?

Yes: 75.36%

No: 24.64 %

2. Do you qualify for Employment Insurance under current Federal Government aid packages, i.e. Canada Emergency Response Benefit?

Yes: 18.18%

No: 81.82%

Note: This question was proposed on April 1, 2020. The Federal Government has since made changes to the CERB program

3. Have you lost students due to parents being out of work?

Yes: 59.09%

No: 40.91%

4. Are you able to teach online in terms of computer skills and equipment?

Yes: 85.29%

No: 14.71%

5. Do you believe the Federal Government will support music teachers during this crisis?

Yes: 52.24%

No: 47.76 %

The following comments are a representative portion of the responses we received. Thank you to all who participated. Every single comment was read and considered.

- *I will also lose income related to collaborative work, playing for choirs, studio recitals that have been cancelled. I will definitely lose income.*
- *I am able to teach but not all students are able to take lessons online, so my teaching load is a small fraction of what it was.*
- *I did take a sudden hit financially with a few students dropping out or "disappearing".*
- *I foresee that I will take the biggest hit financially a few months down the road when parents begin dropping non-essential costs as this drags out.*
- *My concern is not for the immediate, but for the long term as we most likely head towards a recession. Music lessons are often viewed as a luxury or onus activity, and with many people out of work currently, I expect registrations for summer programs to be low, or possible not even an option, and certainly expect lower registrations in September.*
- *Like many musicians, I have multiple income streams: teaching, church music, performing, etc. While I am able to continue teaching most students online, I have lost all other work due to Covid-19 closures.*
- *Online lessons have very low quality compared to face to face.*
- *I didn't find these questions apropos ... I doubt whether this survey will give you what you need for effective advocacy.*
- *I am teaching online but not coping well. It has been a huge learning curve and my anxiety level is very high.*
- *Please clarify whether support payments are taxable income or will need to be repaid.*

REMEMBER ...

The Special Edition E-Festival is ongoing April 14 to 19. Please visit:

<http://www.cfmta.org/en/e-festival/> or <https://www.cfmta.org/fr/e-festival/> for information and to participate. Once again, a **big thank you** to the E-Festival Committee for putting this Special Edition together!

Your CFMTA/FCAPM Officers wish you good health and good teaching!



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