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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
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April 12, 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your commitment to support and keep Canadians safe during these difficult times.

Many Canadians have turned to various federal supports to stay afloat throughout the pandemic. However, there is a group of Canadians that has been overlooked.

Many COVID long haulers are suffering alone, unheard and are battling with unpredictable and unrelenting symptoms of COVID-19. Due to a lack of government action, long haulers have set up their own support groups, formed alliances, and have started running their own research projects.

As you may know, long haulers experience persistent illness and symptoms of COVID-19 that continue for many months after initial infection. Many Canadians have been living with long COVID symptoms for months, and the number continues to grow. Recent statistics indicate that 85% of hospitalized cases of COVID-19 develop into long COVID. Other cases remain unrecorded, as many patients are never hospitalized.

Ongoing symptoms of long COVID can be serious and may include damages to the brain, heart, lungs, kidney, or liver; debilitating fatigue; brain fog; depression; cognitive impairment; muscle weakness; and other life-threatening symptoms. In addition to the physical and mental hardship, long haulers are experiencing financial and employment difficulties. Many of them are unable to return to work, let alone look for a job.

Without support, long haulers are likely to become chronically ill, creating a societal and economic crisis for Canada.

In light of this serious new illness, the federal government should consider a series of actions, in conjunction with provincial governments. At a minimum, Health Canada should formally recognize "long haulers" as having a recognized medical condition, defined as "long COVID." We should invest in research and rehabilitation and provide income support to long haulers within Canada.

Canada must recognize long COVID as a health condition. The World Health Organization (WHO) has [recognized](#) the “post-covid-19 condition” and has urged other countries to prioritize research, rehabilitation and to “contribute clinical data to the WHO Clinical Platform to expand our knowledge on the post covid-19 condition”.

Unfortunately, many Canadians are having their insurance claims denied. Lacking a named health condition, they are having trouble accessing income supports like EI or emergency COVID programmes. Further, they are not being taken seriously by health care practitioners. Many front-line workers are being required to return to work and are becoming increasingly vulnerable.

The federal government must invest in urgent and targeted research for long COVID. This interdisciplinary research must study its cause(s); manifestation; long-term consequences; and potential therapies. This research may be carried out by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This must be a coordinated and focused effort that recognizes the urgency of the matter.

Other jurisdictions have already invested significant federal funds into this type of research. Last December, the United States Congress provided [\\$1.15 billion in funding](#), over four years, for the National Institutes of Health to support research into the prolonged health consequences of COVID-19. In a similar manner, Canada must prioritize coordinated research for long COVID.

The federal government must expand the eligibility for the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) to Canadians who are unable to seek employment, and who can provide a medical certificate proving they are long COVID patients, similar to the one required for EI sickness benefits.

Long haulers are calling for a network of inclusive rehabilitation centres and clinics that are accessible to all long COVID patients. Many long haulers who fell ill during the first wave of the pandemic were denied testing or were tested too late to get a positive result. Many of them were denied medical help and blocked from accessing research initiatives and rehabilitation. Federal funding and a coordinated standard must be put in place to provide clarity to the provinces and territories for rehabilitation eligibility and guidelines.

COVID long haulers in Canada must not be forgotten. The federal government must act urgently and listen to their cries for support and recognition.

Many thanks,



Elizabeth May, O.C.  
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cc: The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health  
The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry  
The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability  
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