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**Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation Position Statement**  
**Resuming Restorative Surgery: Prioritizing Orthopaedic Surgery Nationwide**  
***For those living with debilitating pain every day, surgery is essential***

The Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation represents and provides education and care programs for patients with bone and joint conditions across the country. Patients tell us that the lengthy wait times for pain-relieving orthopaedic surgeries has been made excruciatingly longer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 pandemic begins to stabilize and health care decision-makers face challenges regarding prioritizing surgeries, the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation is advocating for the many thousands of orthopaedic patients who continue to live with debilitating pain every single day.

Canadian joint replacement patients face the longest wait times of developed countries according to CIHI with access now being [worse than 4 years ago](#). With surgeries deferred due to the pandemic these wait times are now even longer, and patients are suffering intolerable pain.

**Surgery necessary for optimal health – longer wait times mean worsening conditions**

Though frequently referred to as “elective” (suggesting choice) these surgeries are far from optional; for patients who can’t move, or sleep, or even breathe without pain, surgery is absolutely critical. Given the impact of pain on an individual’s life and the amount of pain relief from surgery, these operations also cannot be referred to as “lifestyle” surgeries. Throughout the pandemic, while they wait for surgery, patients’ pain is worsening, their mental health and their other health conditions are worsening, and full recovery to a normal life slips away.

**Consequences of delayed surgeries**

The longer patients are required wait for pain-relieving orthopaedic surgery the higher their chances of opioid addiction and extreme stress and anxiety, and the [less benefit they get](#) from a joint replacement operation. These surgeries are not ones of choice, but of absolute need.

**Optimizing outcomes for all patients:**

The Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation fully supports the recommendations of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association, representing Canada’s orthopaedic surgeons: “We suggest instituting measures that will address both the lifesaving and the enormous backlog of restorative procedures. Several potential options exist ... moving COVID-19 patients to non-traditional institutions, extending OR times, and recruiting private surgery centres may help manage a predicted, unsurmountable backlog of patients.”

Orthopaedic patients who saw a light at the end of the tunnel as their surgery dates approached – a time when they could live without pain – have seen that light extinguished with the OR closures.

Canada’s healthcare system must not let them down. These pain-relieving, life-changing surgeries must proceed as soon as possible.