



Canadian Cancer Society  
Société canadienne du cancer

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY  
2016 FEDERAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

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## Executive summary

There is nothing that Canadians value more than good health, and we face no greater health challenge than cancer.

Two of every 5 Canadians will develop cancer during their lifetimes. About 25% of us will die from the disease, making it our leading cause of death. Over the next 15 years, the total number of cancer cases is predicted to increase by 40% as our population continues to grow and age.

In addition to the devastating emotional and physical toll that cancer takes on patients and their families, cancer also costs Canadians \$17.4 billion per year in direct health care costs, and lost productivity. As the number of cancer cases increases, so will the demands on the healthcare system and the burden on our economy.

As federal and provincial/territorial governments begin to negotiate a new health accord they must find practical and affordable solutions to meet Canadians' needs and sustain our healthcare system. Fortunately, such solutions exist.

The recommendations that follow – for a stronger tobacco control strategy, smart long-term federal research investments, and guaranteed access to palliative care – will help stop more cancers before they start, provide badly needed support to patients and their families and establish a practical foundation for making longer-term progress

In the 2016 Federal Budget, the Canadian Cancer Society is calling on the federal government to:

- 1) Strengthen Health Canada's Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS) by significantly increasing its current \$38 million annual budget.**
- 2) Increase access to affordable, high-quality palliative care for all Canadians.**
- 3) Commit to long-term investments in health research that keep up with rising costs and population growth and are delivered through simple, streamlined funding programs that maximize the impact of every dollar.**

## Introduction

There is nothing that Canadians value more than good health, and we face no greater health challenge than cancer.

Every single hour about 22 Canadians hear the words “I’m sorry, you have cancer,” joining the more than 810,000 people across the country already living with the disease. One of every 4 of us can expect to die from cancer, making it Canada’s leading cause of death.

According to the recently published 2015 *Canadian Cancer Statistics*, the number of cancer cases is projected to increase by 40% over the next 15 years as our population continues to grow and age. Without a strong national response, this growing challenge will result in a potentially devastating burden on our healthcare system.

There is a very real risk that the dramatic increase in cancer cases will overwhelm families, healthcare providers and our economy. Beyond its terrible physical and emotional toll, cancer has a crushing financial impact. Cancer costs Canadians \$17.4 billion per year, according to a 2004 Statistics Canada report. Tens of thousands of cancer patients are struggling to pay for medication, find affordable homecare and continue earning enough income to support themselves and their families while they undergo chemotherapy or radiation treatment.

While the vast majority of new cancer diagnoses will affect people 50 years of age or older, the stakes are high for all Canadians. The future health and well-being of younger Canadians will be directly affected by the decisions we make now. Their odds of developing cancer during their lifetimes, and their hope of recovering from it, will depend on what we do to better treat and prevent the disease. Today we are all beneficiaries of life-saving advances achieved through decades of work by cancer researchers, clinicians, advocates and policy-makers.

The recommendations that follow – for a stronger tobacco control strategy, smart long-term federal research investments, and improved access to palliative care – will help stop more cancers before they start, provide badly needed support to patients and their families and establish a practical foundation for making longer-term progress.

## Recommendation 1:

**Strengthen Health Canada's Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS) by significantly increasing its current \$38 million annual budget.**

Despite the dramatic decline in the percentage of Canadians who smoke, now at 18%, the total number of smokers – 5.4 million across the country – remains stubbornly high. Smoking remains Canada's leading preventable cause of death, killing 37,000 Canadians annually and leading to about 30% of all cancer fatalities. Making matters worse, an unacceptably high number of young people begin smoking each year.

One factor undermining the federal role in tobacco control has been declining resources. When it was created almost 15 years ago, Canada's Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FCTS) was intended to have an annual budget of \$110 million, but today's investment is barely one-third that amount.

In the wake of major budget cuts announced in 2012, annual investments in tobacco control by the federal government stand at \$38 million – equal to just 1.2% of the \$3.3 billion collected by the federal government through tobacco taxes. Proper funding is a prerequisite for the comprehensive and sustained tobacco strategy Canada needs. With the right resources, we can target youth tobacco use, a top priority given that the overwhelming majority of smokers begin as teenagers or pre-teens.

The current FCTS expires March 31, 2017. It is essential that there be a more effective and properly funded replacement. In the United States, per capita federal investments in tobacco control are far higher than in Canada. US per capita annual federal funding is C\$2.67 compared to only C\$1.06 per capita in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Given the magnitude of the tobacco epidemic, Health Canada's FCTS must be comprehensive, well-funded, and sustained. Increased funding would allow for the return of mass media public awareness campaigns; improved research, surveillance and enforcement; increased capacity for legislative and policy development; and enhanced programming for youth prevention, adult cessation, and aboriginal

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<sup>1</sup> US total federal tobacco funding is \$666 million per year, or US\$2.09 per capita. Exchange rate: 1.2765.

populations. The emergence of new products and trends, such as electronic cigarettes and water pipe (hookah) smoking, underlines the need for a more robust Health Canada strategy.

New investments should be coordinated with other measures, including detailed legislative reform highlighted by the implementation of plain packaging. The government has committed to implement plain packaging, with the measure included as a “top priority” in the mandate letter from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to Minister of Health Jane Philpott. Plain packaging has been in place in Australia since 2012, and will be in place in Ireland, the United Kingdom and France by May 2016.

## Recommendation 2

### **Increase access to affordable, high-quality palliative care for all Canadians.**

Palliative care focuses on quality of life of patients with progressive, life-altering illness. Palliative care includes expert pain and symptoms management; skilled psychosocial, emotional and spiritual support; and comfortable living conditions with the appropriate level of care – whether at home, in a hospital or any other settings of patients’ choice.

Receiving palliative care outside of a hospital setting, sometimes at home, is the preference of many patients and often less costly for a publicly funded healthcare system. Unfortunately, for many Canadians this type of care is not available. Palliative care services vary dramatically across Canada, not only from one province or territory to the next, but among communities in the same region.

With a lack of palliative care options, thousands of critically-ill Canadians are turning to emergency wards and intensive care units, which are often not equipped to provide comprehensive and specialized palliative care. At the same time, these patients are occupying scarce acute care hospital beds at a high cost to public health systems.

The need for solutions is becoming more urgent with Canada facing a projected 40% increase in new cancer cases over the next 15 years. As the number of cancer deaths rises, the need for proper palliative care will also grow.

Canada needs a new approach that works better for patients and lowers the high costs of hospital care. By expanding support for homecare and family caregivers, our healthcare system can deliver palliative care at a fraction of what it costs in acute care hospitals, while easing the financial burden on patients and their families.

Upfront costs will have to be incurred to facilitate the introduction of home and community-based palliative care services. The federal government must follow through with its commitment to invest \$3 billion over the next four years to improve home and palliative care, and negotiate a new national health accord with provinces and territories that guarantees all Canadians have access to affordable, high-quality palliative care.

### Recommendation 3:

**Commit to long-term investments in health research that keep up with rising costs and population growth, including long-term funding for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and targeted investments in cancer prevention research.**

Health science is key to the fight against cancer. Cancer research has fueled tremendous progress over the years. Decades of work by dedicated researchers have led to better cancer prevention, detection and treatment. The impact on survival rates has been especially dramatic. Today over 60% of Canadians diagnosed with cancer will survive at least 5 years. In the 1940s, survival was about 25%. And, in addition to improving health, health research is also an important driver of the economy.

The federal government plays a critical role in health research. In addition to charitable funding for health research – including the Canadian Cancer Society’s \$40-million annual research investment – Canadian researchers rely on public funding, including major investments by Ottawa.

Federal investments in health research have flat-lined since 2008, and there is no plan in place for future investments to keep up with population growth or rising costs. Health research is a cornerstone of the new knowledge economy, but Canada’s leadership in this area is under threat. **In the 2016 Budget, we urge the Government to commit to sustainable, long-term investments in health research. In this budget, we specifically call for immediate investments in 2 areas:**

1. **Long-term funding for CIHR.** As a funder of health research, we know that every year, many first class proposals do not get funded for lack of resources. Progress in the fight against cancer is directly tied to the advances that we make in health research, which is why it is paramount that the federal government commit to increased funding in health research over time.

Knowledge and innovation are the keys to building a better health system, so it is imperative that Canada’s health research investments keep up with rising costs and growing health needs. However, the annual budget of CIHR has remained at approximately \$1B/year since 2008, and now represents just 2.5% of total federal health spending down from almost 4% in 2008. The current government has committed to increase future health transfers to provinces and territories by an amount based on GDP growth and no less than 3% per year. We recommend that the federal government commit, at minimum, to annual investments in health research at the same rate. In the first three years this would result in a total \$100 million increase in CIHR funding.

2. **Funding for cancer prevention research.** About half of all cancers can be prevented. With the expected rise in cancer cases by 40% by 2030, prevention of the disease must become a key priority in Canada’s strategy moving forward.

Substantial progress in achieving this goal will begin with a transformational investment in cancer prevention and the infrastructure required to support it. The Canadian Cancer Society is committed to addressing prevention as part of our mission and we are doing so through the creation of a Cancer Prevention Centre in Western Canada and supporting prevention research through our

research program. This is why we are urging the next federal budget to earmark funding for cancer prevention, including \$12.5 million to support the construction of a flagship Cancer Prevention Centre in Western Canada and an additional \$12.5 million for the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute's (CCSRI) Prevention Research Program.