



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY
2017 FEDERAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

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About us

Powered by 140,000 volunteers and a network of nationwide staff, and supported by millions of Canadians, the Canadian Cancer Society is Canada's largest national health charity.

Throughout our 77-year history, the Society has been a champion of healthcare improvements and innovation. We are dedicated to finding new and better ways to protect the health of Canadians, shrink cancer rates and reduce cancer's toll on our country. Over the years, we have invested more than \$1.3 billion in Canadian science, which has resulted in fewer people developing cancer and more people surviving it and living longer, healthier lives.

We are building on our legacy, and we are ready to work in partnership with the Government of Canada – on behalf of all Canadians – to make the recommendations in this document a reality.

Executive summary

The federal government has outlined a new nationwide health agenda that promises to save more lives, build more sustainable health systems and make life better for people living with cancer and other chronic diseases. It has committed to reduce tobacco use, strengthen health research and – of critical importance – establish a new health accord that expands home and palliative care and improves access to necessary prescription medications.

The federal government must now follow through on its commitments and, in partnership with provinces and territories, implement its agenda in a way that achieves measurable, long-term improvements in the prevention, detection and treatment of cancer and other life-threatening illnesses. This is especially pressing given the projected 40% increase in new cancer cases expected to take place across Canada over the next 15 years.

We are calling on the federal government to take the following steps in Budget 2017:

- Commit to funding a national health accord, in partnership with provinces and territories, that improves and guarantees access to proper, quality medical care – including prescription drugs and palliative care – for all Canadians with cancer.
- Renew and enhance the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy, which is currently scheduled to expire in March 2017.
- Commit to consistent, secure, long-term investments in health research generally, and cancer research in particular, following the completion of the review of federal support for science currently underway.

Introduction:

The federal government has promised Canadians a new era of nationwide health leadership. The government has set out to establish a new health accord, in partnership with provinces and territories, to ensure that Canada can meet its health needs “and the challenges that come with an aging population.”¹ Among the most important objectives for the new accord are improving home and palliative care and improving access to necessary prescription medications.

The government is also undertaking other important health-related initiatives, strengthening tobacco control regulations, promising to improve financial support for family caregivers and launching a review of federal support for science, including the government’s nearly \$1 billion per year in health research funding programs.

Together these commitments have the potential to fix serious holes in Canadian health systems, saving lives and making life better for patients and families in the process.

Success hinges on the government’s willingness to take the next step. It must follow through on its commitments and, of equal importance, take steps to ensure they result in measurable, long-term improvements in how we fight disease and care for the people affected by it.

Cancer: a nationwide health and economic challenge

Effectively implementing the government’s health agenda is critically important to the fight against cancer. As Canada’s leading cause of death, cancer is the very definition of a nationwide health issue. About 2 in 5 Canadians will develop cancer in their lifetime, and about 1 in 4 Canadians will die of the disease.

With the country facing a 40% projected increase in the number of new cancer cases by 2030, cancer is the single most serious health challenge facing our aging society.² The challenge of preventing, detecting and treating the disease is so vast that it requires both disease-specific strategies and a supporting framework of broader, nationwide health policies, programs and services.

¹ Liberal Party of Canada. 2015. *A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class*. <https://www.liberal.ca/files/2015/10/New-plan-for-a-strong-middle-class.pdf>

² Canadian Cancer Society’s Advisory Committee on Cancer Statistics. *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2015*. Toronto ON: Canadian Cancer Society; 2015.

Beyond its physical and emotional toll, cancer has a devastating financial impact. Tens of thousands of people with cancer are struggling to pay for medication, find affordable homecare and continue earning enough income to support themselves and their families while they undergo treatment. Cancer also has a significant impact on the Canadian economy, costing more than \$4.4 billion in healthcare costs. It is also the costliest illness in terms of lost productivity due to premature death.³

Without a strong, effective national response, supported by federal, provincial and territorial governments, there is a risk that the rising number of cancer cases will overwhelm our healthcare system, compromising the quality of care available to Canadians today and crowding out the investments required to better prevent and treat the disease tomorrow. We must not allow that to happen.

Recommendation 1: national health accord

Commit to funding a new national health accord, in partnership with provinces and territories, that will extend access to proper, quality medical care – including prescription drugs and palliative care – to all Canadians with cancer.

The federal government's commitment to establish a new national health accord can help fix serious gaps in Canadian healthcare, most notably in the areas of prescription drug coverage and access to home and palliative care.

However, as Canadians have repeatedly seen over the years, governments must go beyond making promises and deliver something more than new spending to achieve meaningful health reforms.

In the long term, the explicit objective of federal health investments must be to help achieve universal, equitable access – for all Canadians – to critical medical services that are not currently provided on an equitable or reliable basis across the country.

In Budget 2017 the federal government must follow through on its promise to invest \$3 billion over 4 years in better home and palliative care.⁴ This funding should be used as a down payment on long-term strategies to ensure that all Canadians with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses have improved access to proper quality palliative care and necessary medications, whether they are cared for in hospital, in the community or at home.

³ Reference: Public Health Agency of Canada 2014. *Economic Burden of Illness in Canada, 2005–2008*. Ottawa.

⁴ Liberal Party of Canada. 2015. *A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class*. <https://www.liberal.ca/files/2015/10/New-plan-for-a-strong-middle-class.pdf>

Canada needs a new approach that works better for patients and families 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 people with cancer and their families.

The Canadian Cancer Society believes that the federal government is an essential partner in improving outcomes and quality of care for Canadians. Working with provinces and territories, the government must develop an accountability framework for the new health accord that clearly shows Canadians how their tax dollars are being used to improve care today and guarantee universal access tomorrow.

Recommendation 2: Federal Tobacco Control Strategy

Strengthen the 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 (FTCS) 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 FTCS 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\$2.85 compared to only C\$1.05 per capita in Canada.⁵ One example of successful initiatives in the US is the

⁵ US total federal tobacco funding is US\$735 million per year, or US\$2.28 per capita. Exchange rate: 1.25.

national Tips from Former Smokers media campaign, launched in 2012, that has been estimated to have helped 400,000 smokers quit, saving 50,000 lives.

Given the magnitude of the tobacco epidemic, Health Canada's FTCS 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 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 was recently implemented in the United Kingdom and France.

Recommendation 3: health research

Commit to consistent, secure, long-term investments in health research generally, and cancer research in particular, following the completion of the review of federal support for science currently underway.

Health science is a cornerstone of the knowledge economy and a key to the fight against cancer. 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%.

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.

However, current funding levels are inadequate, which is hurting health science in Canada. Every year, many first-class research proposals do not get funded for lack of resources. The annual budget of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has remained at

approximately \$1 billion since 2008 and now represents just 2.5% of total federal health spending, down from almost 4% a few years ago.⁶

Learning more about our health challenges enables us to address those challenges more effectively and efficiently. However, while CIHR investments have flat lined in recent years, federal health transfers to provinces and territories have grown by 6% annually. To build health systems that are smarter, and not just bigger, we need to make sure that our research investments do not fall any further behind.

⁶ Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). 2015. *CIHR@15: Annual Report 2014-15*. http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/documents/cihr_annual_report_2014-15_e.pdf