

THE LUNG ASSOCIATION™

The Canadian Lung Association

2017 Federal Pre-Budget Submission

Prepared for the Standing Committee on Finance

The Lung Association

BACKGROUND

The Lung Association is pleased to provide input to the 2017 pre-budget submission. The mission of the Lung Association is to help all Canadians breathe easily. It is our focus, our raison d'être and our commitment to Canadians. For more than 100 years, the Lung Association has been fighting for healthy lungs and healthy air. We are the leading organization working to help Canadians breathe by preventing lung disease and improving lives through research, education and patient support.

Every day thousands of Canadians are pulled out of their workplaces, schools and homes and into doctors' offices, emergency rooms and hospital beds by a myriad of respiratory illnesses: asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), sleep apnea, lung cancer, cystic fibrosis, influenza, tuberculosis (TB), pneumonia and other diseases. According to the Conference Board of Canada, without continued concerted action, the cost to the healthcare system of asthma, COPD and lung cancer alone will rise to more than \$18 billion by 2020 and \$27 billion by 2030.

The good news is that many of these conditions are preventable and treatable with early diagnosis and proper care. The bad news is that millions of Canadians continue to be exposed to risk factors, such as tobacco smoke, air pollution and toxic substances, and the resulting illnesses contribute to these escalating healthcare system costs.

Executive Summary Key Recommendations

Prevention, education, and commitment to research are essential in creating a future free of lung disease. The Lung Association recommends that the federal government continue its support for action to reduce the heavy financial burden of respiratory disease by:

- Committing to long-term investments in health research, consistent with the rising healthcare costs and population growth. As part of long-term investments to health research, targeted funding should be allocated to fund emerging respiratory researchers and tuberculosis research.
- Funding a renewed, enhanced Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS) through Health Canada and increasing the \$38 million annual budget allocated towards the current FTCS that ends March 31, 2017.

The Case for Increased and Sustained Investment in Respiratory Research

Lung disease continues to devastate Canadians. Despite progress over the years in prevention and treatment, respiratory diseases continue to have a devastating impact on the physical and economic health of people living in Canada. The Conference Board conservatively estimates that the economic burden of chronic lung diseases was \$12 billion in 2010. The estimate includes direct healthcare costs, including hospital and physicians (\$3.4 billion in 2010), as well as indirect costs such as premature death and long-term disability (\$8.6 billion in 2010).

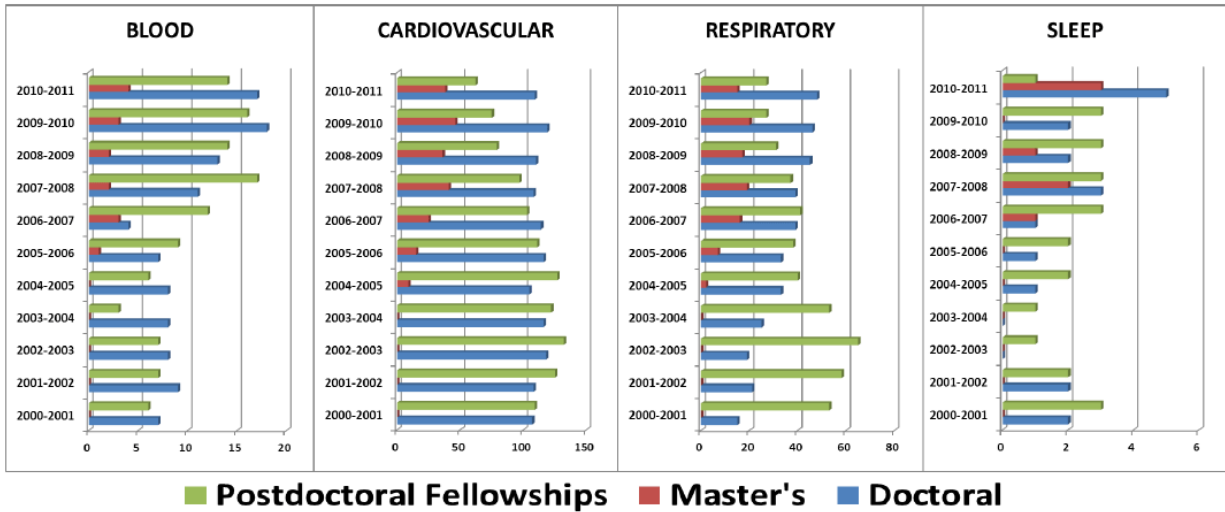
In striking contrast, respiratory research, which is vital to the development and introduction of innovative technologies and treatments, represented only 2.4 per cent of health research funding distributed by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) in 2013-14. This is a significant decrease from the 4.5 per cent of CIHR funding respiratory research in 2008/2009, and overall, disproportionately low given the significant burden. Up to now, the federal investment in lung health research has not been sufficient to adequately address the toll of lung disease in Canada.

The Lung Association has taken the lead in addressing this research gap by creating the National Respiratory Research Strategy (NRRS) in partnership with the Canadian Thoracic Society and the Canadian Respiratory Health Professionals. The NRRS advances the prevention, detection, management, and treatment of breathing disorders and respiratory diseases by funding research, enhancing and integrating training for researchers, and supporting knowledge translation. The Lung Association has launched the national fundraising campaign, *Breathing as One*, with an initial goal of raising more than \$10 million to support the implementation of the strategy. We believe that further targeted investments from the federal government are necessary to ensure that the disparity between burden and investment is addressed.

Recommendation 1: An additional allocation of \$5 million over five years of targeted funding to the Lung Association's research training pillar that provides establishment grants for young investigators. This includes salary support for postdoctoral and doctoral trainees, and a training program with structured mentoring and networking with leading researchers and networks in the respiratory research field.

While Canada has enjoyed the reputation of being a world leader in the field of respiratory research, there is a deepening concern that this distinction could be jeopardized. According to the Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health (ICRH), there is a shortage of trainees and young investigators in respiratory health. The ICRH 2013-2016 Strategic Plan states, "of greatest concern is the almost constant decrease in the number of postdoctoral fellows (the ones closest to beginning an independent scientific career) over the last seven years in cardiovascular and respiratory health, two areas of great disease burden."

There has been a seven-year constant decrease (over 50%) in the number of postdoctoral awards in two major ICRH mandated fields (cardiovascular & respiratory), which has resulted in a slower growth in total grant applications (22% ICRH vs. 107% for CIHR total since 2000).



Source: ICRH Strategic Plan: 2013-2016 (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/47022.html>)

The Lung Association is concerned about the decline of investigators, which could result in a generational mass exodus from respiratory research in Canada, thereby decimating our research capacity and limiting our ability to discover new treatments and cures for the 1 in 5 Canadians who have lung disease.

The Lung Association has developed a very ambitious plan to seek research investments from individual donors, industry partners, and other private sources. However, these efforts alone cannot fulfill the pressing need for additional research funds. The support of key public partners including CIHR and sustained investment from the federal government for respiratory research is vital.

Recommendation 2: An additional allocation of \$2 million of targeted funding for tuberculosis research in Canada.

A century ago tuberculosis (TB) was one of the major public health threats to Canadians. Globally, 9.6 million people had active TB in 2014. Recognizing the prevalence of drug-resistant cases of TB globally and its possible negative impact on global health security, the World Health Organization has developed The END TB strategy, which has the goal to eradicate TB by 2030. The Lung Association’s objective is to complement this goal and develop a strategy that will have a significant impact on the prevention, treatment, education and care for those Canadians suffering from TB. Despite significant successes at eradication of TB in most of Canada, there are still cases of active TB; in 2014, Canada reported 1,568 cases of active TB. TB rates are disproportionately represented among foreign-born individuals and Canadian-born Aboriginal people.

Developed in collaboration with Canada’s leading researchers, our National Research Strategy identified the prevention of TB and the treatment/education and care thereof as two key priorities on which the Lung Association will focus. In order to deliver on these goals and successfully contribute towards the WHO strategy, we need more funding and we ask the federal government to commit an additional \$2 million to targeted TB funding in Canada.

Recommendation 3: Commit to a renewed strengthened Federal Tobacco Control Strategy that will tackle the number one cause of lung disease.

While smoking rates in Canada continue to gradually decline, we need to become even more aggressive in our efforts to eliminate smoking rates altogether. Tobacco use is the most significant preventable cause of lung disease and resulting death in Canada. In addition to its health burden, smoking – and resulting lung diseases – also have a negative economic impact. A well-funded federal tobacco strategy is critical. In order to reduce the projected economic burden in 2030 of \$24.1 billion from chronic lung disease, effective prevention strategies need to be implemented. A strong Federal Tobacco Control Strategy is key to preventing an increase in the future economic burden of respiratory disease in Canada. The current strategy expires on March 31st, 2017 and it is critical that a renewed, enhanced strategy be put in place that is effective and properly funded.

Specifically, a new Federal Tobacco Control Strategy should provide additional funds to strengthen youth prevention programs, cessation programs, mass media, legislative and policy development, enforcement, research, and other tobacco control initiatives. Some of the previously successful measures to combat tobacco use, including Health Canada’s mass media campaigns to discourage smoking, have ended.

Additionally, we need reliable statistics on current tobacco rates in Canada to fully understand tobacco use. The Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey should be conducted annually (rather than every two years) with more detailed questions on usage as well as products to provide better surveillance and marketplace information.

Finally, the renewed, enhanced tobacco strategy must address the emerging issues related to new products on the market such as electronic cigarettes and water pipes.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Our mission is to help Canadians breathe with ease whether genetics, behaviours or environmental impacts have made this basic necessity difficult. Prevention and education are key in giving Canada a future free of lung disease. We need your help to achieve the goals that will make this possible. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our submission.

About The Lung Association:

The Canadian Lung Association is the leading organization in Canada working to save lives, prevent and improve lung health through research, advocacy, education and support.

As non-profit and volunteer-based health charity, we depend on donations from the public to support our mission to lead nationwide and international lung health initiatives, prevent lung disease, help people manage lung disease and promote lung health.

The Canadian Lung Association is a federated national charity comprising ten provincial associations, a national office and partners with two professional societies – the Canadian Thoracic Society and the Canadian Respiratory Health Professionals.

Located in Ottawa, our national office delivers high-quality online lung health information, leads national advocacy and awareness efforts and manages a national research program.