



Canadian Cancer Society  
Société canadienne du cancer

Honourable John Horgan  
Chair, Council of the Federation and Premier of British Columbia  
[premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)  
Open Letter, July 11, 2022

Dear Chair Horgan and Premiers,

The Canadian Cancer Society is grateful that the Council of the Federation (the Council) is committed to ensuring that our healthcare system recovers from the pressures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for long-term stability in the decades to come.

As you work to address the healthcare challenges and inequities facing Canadians, we urge you to make cancer a priority.

Cancer is the leading cause of death for Canadians. Two in 5 Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. In 2022, there will be an estimated 233,900 new cancer cases and 85,100 cancer deaths expected in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Despite the progress we have made, the number of new cancer cases continues to increase as a result of the growing and aging population. Between 2015 and 2030, the number of new cancer cases diagnosed is expected to increase about 40%. A Canadian modelling study estimated that disruptions to cancer care during the pandemic could lead to 21,247 more deaths from cancer above what is expected in Canada between 2020 and 2030, representing a loss of 355,172 years of life.<sup>2</sup>

If we want to save and improve lives, the time to act is now.

The Canadian Cancer Society supports all Canadians living with all cancers across the country. We understand the need to strengthen our healthcare system: we hear every day from people living with cancer and their caregivers who are concerned about their cancer experience, such as the impact resulting from delays and lengthy wait times for treatment or the financial burden from expensive cancer drugs.

These serious challenges are why the Canadian Cancer Society supports long-term, stable health funding to help create a sustainable healthcare system that can address current and future needs of people living in Canada.

We believe that increases in health funding should be clearly and transparently reflected in immediate investments that improve our healthcare system, with targeted funding for healthcare services throughout the cancer experience of many thousands of people in Canada. Plans to improve cancer services must address the unique needs of underserved communities, many that are disproportionately affected by cancer.

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<sup>1</sup> Brenner DR, Poirier A, Woods RR, Ellison LF et al for the Canadian Cancer Statistics Advisory Committee. (2022). Projected estimates of cancer in Canada in 2022. *CMAJ* 194 (17): E601-E607.

<sup>2</sup> Malagón, T., Yong, J., Tope, P., Miller, W. H., Jr, Franco, E. L., & McGill Task Force on the Impact of COVID-19 on Cancer Control and Care (2022). Predicted long-term impact of COVID-19 pandemic-related care delays on cancer mortality in Canada. *International Journal of Cancer*, 150(8), 1244-1254. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijc.33884>



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We encourage the Council to adopt our suite of recommendations to:

- provide better access to palliative care to improve the quality of life for people with cancer;
- implement cancer prevention policies and programs that will have an important population health impact (such as eating well, living smoke free and reducing alcohol consumption);
- increase early detection efforts such as increasing reach of organized screening programs;
- commit to reducing wait times and clearing pandemic-related diagnostic and surgical backlogs within a defined timeline;
- develop and execute a robust nationwide health human resources strategy;
- and accelerate cancer research, address gaps in data collection across the cancer control continuum and enhance innovation.

Achieving these recommendations will help ensure that people living with cancer have equitable access to programs and care they need.

We invite you to meet with the Canadian Cancer Society to learn more about our recommendations to make cancer a priority as you prepare to negotiate the First Ministers' Agreement on Sustainable Health Care Funding. We would be happy to discuss details with your representatives and look forward to your reply.

We recognize your leadership and expertise in delivering healthcare services for your population needs. We hope to see all levels of government come together to support the necessary work that will create a sustainable healthcare system. Join us in making equitable and timely access to cancer care services better, regardless of where someone lives or where they receive care, so we can improve cancer outcomes for all people in Canada.

Sincerely,

Andrea Seale

Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Cancer Society

Cc:

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health  
Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs  
Hon. Jason Copping, Minister of Health, Alberta  
Hon. Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, British Columbia  
Hon. Christian Dubé, Ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Québec  
Hon. Audrey Gordon, Minister of Health, Manitoba  
Hon. Julie Green, Minister of Health and Social Services, Northwest Territories



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Hon. Dr. John Haggie, Minister of Health and Community Services, Newfoundland and Labrador

Hon. Ernie Hudson, Minister of Health and Wellness, Prince Edward Island

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health, Ontario

Hon. John Main, Minister of Health, Nunavut

Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, Yukon

Hon. Paul Merriman, Minister of Health, Saskatchewan

Hon. Dorothy Shephard, Minister of Health, New Brunswick

Hon. Michelle Thompson, Minister of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia