



**2021**

**Nova Scotia**

Provincial Election  
Policy Recommendations



Canadian  
Cancer  
Society

CANCER.CA



## A vision for Nova Scotia

On any given day, over 617 Canadians will hear the words, “you have cancer.”

Imagine a Nova Scotia with less cancer and fewer Nova Scotians hearing these words. Where public policies create supportive environments that empower people to live healthier lives. Where everyone can comfortably talk to their healthcare providers about their cancer risk, potential signs of cancer and can access appropriate screening programs.



Imagine a Nova Scotia where you are able to receive quality care and cancer treatment, regardless of where you live and without experiencing financial hardship. Where your caregivers are fully supported and can be there for you when you need them. Where you can easily access an empowering support system, with information and services that address your questions and concerns.

Our mission at the Canadian Cancer Society: In trusted partnership with donors and volunteers, we continuously improve impact through cancer research, advocacy and support services. To achieve this, we need the support of political parties to implement a strong health agenda that will improve the lives of people with cancer and their families.

We know that cancer changes people and that 1 in 2 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. But a cancer diagnosis doesn't have to define a person. Our goal is to improve the cancer experience by helping people live longer and enhancing their quality of life. Because life is bigger than cancer.

**The Canadian Cancer Society calls upon all political party leaders to take up this challenge in the 2021 provincial election.**

Cancer is a complex and far-reaching issue that cannot be solved in isolation from the larger health agenda. Below we have outlined specific recommendations that will directly support Canadians living with cancer. These recommendations will help to improve access to quality palliative care in Nova Scotia, address all backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19, ensure public health measures aimed to reduce



tobacco use are included in ongoing tobacco settlement negotiations and will expand job protective leave in Nova Scotia.

The Canadian Cancer Society is calling on party leaders to:

- **Improve access to quality palliative care** - The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to improving access to quality palliative care for the people of Nova Scotia and update the [Integrated Palliative Care Strategy](#).
- **Address all backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19** - The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to working with provincial governments and the cancer community on a fully funded plan to address all backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19, as well as the influx of new or late-stage cancer diagnosis forthcoming.
- **Include public health measures in tobacco settlement negotiations** - The Nova Scotia government is currently negotiating with the tobacco industry to settle a lawsuit aimed at recovering health care costs caused by tobacco use. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to the inclusion of significant public health measures in any settlement agreement.
- **Expand job protected leave** - The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to extend the length of sickness leave job protection, from the current 3 days to at least 26 weeks, to align with Employment Insurance sickness benefit. This will help to ensure that those who are facing a life-threatening disease such as cancer can take needed time off work to receive treatment and to heal.

## Improve access to quality palliative care

Nova Scotia has made great strides in many aspects of palliative care. In 2013 Nova Scotia released a strategy titled "[Integrated Palliative Care: Planning for Action in Nova Scotia](#)", and updated progress against this strategy in 2014-15. Many excellent initiatives have been undertaken to support palliative care delivery, but significant work remains. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for increased palliative care resources, care and support for Canadians.

The Canadian Cancer Society believes that all Canadians should be able to choose the best care for them throughout their cancer journey. In Nova Scotia, cancer patients comprise approximately 80-90% of patients who receive palliative care.



Nova Scotians deeply value the role that palliative care plays in health care. In recent polling, almost 95% of Nova Scotia residents support guaranteed access to publicly funded palliative care. Importantly, 84% still support guaranteed access to publicly funded palliative care even if it means a modest increase in their taxes.

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comprise  
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The Nova Scotia government can improve access to quality palliative care by:

- Updating and refreshing the Integrated Palliative Care Strategy
- Providing funding for an adequate number of speciality palliative care staff including palliative care nurses and palliative care social workers across the province
- Investing in resources to deliver palliative care within the home and within long term care settings (i.e., hospital beds)
- Strengthening caregiver supports, particularly related to grief and bereavement
- Improving data collection to better measure and report on palliative and end-of-life care in Nova Scotia

The Canadian Cancer Society recognizes that facing life-threatening illness, especially in relation to pain and suffering, can cause great concern and severe hardship for people. We promote and support the need for improved development and delivery of early, active, competent, and compassionate palliative care. This includes providing expert pain 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 setting of patients' choice.

Palliative care is currently delivered in several settings, including patients' homes, hospitals, outpatient clinics, hospices, and long-term care facilities. A palliative care approach must balance and respect patient choice. Recent polling supports that in the event of terminal illness, 60% of Nova Scotia residents would prefer to receive care at home, followed by 28% of residents who would prefer hospice services. Only 6% indicated that they would prefer in-hospital care. Despite this, about 45% of cancer patients across Canada die in acute care hospitals.



## Address backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19

The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to working with provincial governments and the cancer community on a fully funded plan to address all backlogs in cancer care from COVID-19, as well as the influx of new or late-stage cancer diagnosis forthcoming.

There will be an estimated 225,800 new cancer cases and 83,300 cancer deaths in Canada in 2020—this is a health issue of great consequence and universal concern. Even though surgeries and screening programs have resumed in Nova Scotia, it will take time for our cancer care system to normalize. A Canadian-led study published in the British Medical Journal suggests that just a 4-week delay in cancer treatment increases a person’s risk of death by 10%. This risk varies from 6 to 13% depending on cancer type and type of treatment, and also increases the longer it takes for one’s treatment to start. The results of this study are deeply concerning and reflect an urgent need to prioritize screenings and cancer care moving forward.

**People whose treatment for cancer is delayed by even one month have about a 10% higher risk of dying**

We urge governments to remember that any disruptions to cancer care will be felt long-after the pandemic is behind us. Funding and additional resources are needed to actively support people impacted by cancer now, and long after this pandemic is behind us.

## Include public health measures in tobacco settlement negotiations

All 10 provincial governments, including Nova Scotia, are engaged in a lawsuit against the tobacco industry to recover health care costs associated with tobacco use. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to the inclusion of significant public health measures in any settlement agreement.

Presently, negotiations with the tobacco industry are underway to settle medicare cost recovery lawsuits filed in each province. Provincial lawsuits are seeking more than \$500 billion in damages from tobacco companies, collectively representing the largest lawsuits in Canadian history. Named as defendants are Imperial Tobacco



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Canada Ltd., Rothmans Benson & Hedges Inc., JTI-Macdonald, as well as foreign parent companies such as British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International.

The primary purpose of any settlement should be to reduce tobacco use. Public health measures should include substantial, long-term funding for tobacco control initiatives through an independent foundation, ending all tobacco promotion, requiring public disclosure of undisclosed internal industry documents, and fundamentally reforming industry behaviour so that the wrongdoing of the past is not repeated in the future. At least 10% of the proceeds from any settlement should be allocated to an independent fund to carry out tobacco control initiatives.

**Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in Canada.**

A national Ipsos poll conducted in January-February 2021 found that 88% of Canadians supported “a requirement that a significant proportion of the funds from the lawsuit be used for initiatives to reduce smoking among both adults and youth”.

Tobacco remains a leading cause of cancer, heart disease, stroke and respiratory disease. It is the leading cause of disease and death in Canada. A settlement must contain effective measures to reduce tobacco use.

## **Expand job protective illness leave**

The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all parties commit to extend the length of sickness leave job protection from the current 3 days to at least 26 weeks, to align with Employment Insurance sickness benefit. This will help to help ensure that those who are facing a life-threatening disease such as cancer can take critical time off work to receive treatment and to heal.

When Canadians face cancer, their struggle is not just medical but also financial. The Canadian Cancer Society believes that people who are facing a life-threatening illness such as cancer require financial support and job protected leave when they take time off work to receive and recover from treatment. Canadians should not have to choose between receiving cancer treatment and working.

**Nova Scotians should not have to choose between receiving cancer treatment and working.**

The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that the government of Nova Scotia amend legislation to expand the scope of job protected illness



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leave, to support improvements in equitable and fulsome access to care without undue finance burden. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends:

- Extend the length of sickness job protected leave to at least 26 weeks to align with the federal Employment Insurance sickness benefit
- Allow leave eligibility criteria to align with other forms of leave
- Allow leave flexibility for workers by allowing them to take leave in smaller units
- Authorize expanded access to leave by regulation

Unfortunately, depending on where a person resides in Canada, an individual may face job loss when they take time off work to receive treatment. In Nova Scotia, an individual who takes time off work due to illness is at risk of losing their job after only 3 days of leave. Nova Scotians should not have to choose between receiving cancer treatment and working.

### About the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) is the only national charity that supports Canadians with all cancers in communities across the country. No other organization does what we do; we are the voice for Canadians who care about cancer. We fund groundbreaking research, provide a support system for all those affected by cancer and shape health policies to prevent cancer and support those living with the disease.

**Help us make a difference. Call 1-888-939-3333 or visit [cancer.ca](http://cancer.ca) today.**

### CONTACT

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