



**Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in
Advance of the 2024 Federal Budget**



Recommendations

Recommendation 1: *That the government establish and allocate funding for impactful programs that provide charitable, non-profit agencies working in the field of cancer with financial support to hire researchers and conduct outreach activities aimed at improving the lives of those affected by the disease.*

Recommendation 2: *That the government strengthen the Disability Tax Credit by implementing an 8.79% increase, bringing the amount to \$9,650.*

Recommendation 3: *That the government advocate for increased funding and support to ensure equitable access to take-home cancer drugs for patients across Canada.*

Recommendation 4: *That the government allocate resources to adjust and expand breast cancer screening guidelines, including increasing the maximum age and decreasing the minimum age for routine screenings.*

Recommendation 5: *That the government advocate for the creation of a comprehensive and centralized national cancer patient navigation system.*

Recommendation 6: *That the government implement a 15% increase in the Canada Health Transfer, bringing the total amount to \$56,834,200,000, to provide vital support in addressing the backlog of cancer services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.*



Introduction

The Canadian Cancer Survivor Network (CCSN) is a national organization of patients, families, survivors, friends, and community partners. Our mission is to work together by taking action to promote the very best standard of care, support, follow up, and quality of life for cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers. With a steadfast commitment to advocating for the interests and welfare of those affected by cancer, CCSN recognizes the immense challenges faced by these individuals throughout their journey. By prioritizing these key areas, we can collectively foster a supportive environment that addresses the unique needs of cancer survivors, while empowering them to lead fulfilling lives beyond their diagnosis.

A decade ago, it was estimated that approximately 1,000,000 Canadians were living with the disease. As of recently, that number has reached 1,500,000.

Cancer is the leading cause of all deaths in Canada, with lung cancer assumed to be the leading cause of deaths in cancer patients.

It was estimated that in 2022,

- ~ 244,000 Canadians would be diagnosed with cancer
- ~ 85,000 Canadians would die from cancer
- 641 Canadians would be diagnosed with cancer every day
- 233 Canadians would die from cancer every day

The impact of cancer extends far beyond the physical and emotional toll it exacts on individuals and their families. The financial hardships faced by those affected by cancer are often profound and can exacerbate the already challenging journey they must endure. From the moment of diagnosis, individuals find themselves navigating a complex web of medical expenses, including costly treatments, medications, surgeries, and supportive care services. These financial burdens can quickly accumulate, placing immense strain on patients and their loved ones.

The Canadian Cancer Survivor Network has established a set of budget recommendations for the 2024 budget aimed at reducing the emotional, physical, and financial burden placed on cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers. These recommendations aim to address these critical challenges and alleviate some of the worries placed on individuals impacted by cancer, with a focus on improving their overall well-being and quality of life. By implementing targeted measures to reduce the financial burden associated with cancer care, improving access to survivorship programs and support services, and fostering research and innovation, the government can effectively address the multifaceted needs of cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers.





Empowering Charitable, Non-Profit Organizations

Charitable, non-profit agencies play a vital role in supporting individuals and families affected by cancer. However, many of these agencies face financial constraints that limit their capacity to conduct research and implement impactful outreach initiatives. By establishing dedicated funding programs, we can empower these agencies to hire researchers and undertake studies focused on addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by those affected by cancer. Additionally, funding would enable them to develop and implement targeted outreach activities that provide vital support, education, and resources to the cancer community.

Allocating funding to charitable, non-profit agency programs can have a transformative impact on the lives of individuals affected by cancer. Research conducted by these agencies can lead to advancements in understanding the disease, improving treatment approaches, and developing supportive care interventions. Furthermore, outreach activities can provide crucial support services, education, and resources to those affected by cancer, fostering empowerment, resilience, and improved quality of life.

Recommendation 1: That the government establish and allocate funding for impactful programs that provide charitable, non-profit agencies working in the field of cancer with financial support to hire researchers and conduct outreach activities aimed at improving the lives of those affected by the disease.



Promoting Financial Equity and Quality of Life

The disability tax credit serves as a crucial pillar of financial assistance and recognition for individuals with disabilities, offering relief from the additional costs associated with their conditions. By advocating for an increase in the disability tax credit, we can strengthen our support for cancer survivors and others living with disabilities, acknowledging the distinctive obstacles they encounter and equipping them with the necessary financial resources to enhance their quality of life.

An enhanced disability tax credit would have far-reaching positive effects on the well-being of individuals with disabilities, including cancer survivors. It would provide crucial relief by alleviating the financial burdens related to medical treatments, assistive devices, accessible transportation, and other essential support services. The resulting increased financial support would contribute to an improved overall quality of life, fostering independence and empowering individuals to actively participate in society.

Advocating for an increased disability tax credit is a testament to our commitment to creating a more inclusive and supportive society for individuals with disabilities. It demonstrates the government's recognition of their valuable contributions and the unique challenges they endure, while effectively addressing the financial barriers they encounter in their daily lives. Together, we can build a stronger and more equitable future for all.

Recommendation 2: That the government strengthen the Disability Tax Credit by implementing an 8.79% increase, bringing the amount to \$9,650.



Transforming Cancer Treatment

The landscape of cancer treatment is undergoing a significant transformation with the emergence of take-home cancer drugs (THCD) such as oral chemotherapy. These medications are increasingly being recognized as a standard and effective treatment option for various types of cancers, leading to a paradigm shift in how this disease is managed. By enabling patients to receive their treatments at home, THCD empower individuals to take an active role in their care while minimizing the need for frequent hospital visits. This shift towards THCD not only enhances patient comfort but also has the potential to reduce healthcare costs associated with inpatient treatments.

By advocating for increased funding and support for take-home cancer drugs, we can prioritize patient-centered care, promote treatment adherence, and improve outcomes for cancer patients. Investing in accessible and affordable oral cancer medications aligns with the goal of providing comprehensive and equitable cancer care throughout the country. The government should actively engage with provincial health authorities to understand the barriers and challenges preventing the public reimbursement of take-home cancer drugs. Collaborate with them to develop a clear roadmap for including these drugs in public reimbursement programs.

Recommendation 3: That the government advocate for increased funding and support to ensure equitable access to take-home cancer drugs for patients across Canada.



Embracing Age Diversity for Improved Detection and Treatment

Current breast cancer screening guidelines often focus on a specific age range, starting at 50 years old and ending at 74 years old. However, it's essential to acknowledge that breast cancer can impact individuals both younger and older than this age bracket, with the incidence of the disease increasing significantly with advancing age. By expanding the upper age limit and lowering the lower age limit for screening, we can ensure that a broader population at risk is included in routine screening programs.

Increasing the maximum age for breast cancer screening acknowledges that older individuals may still benefit from early detection and treatment. Breast cancer risk does not abruptly decline after a specific age, and many individuals remain at risk beyond the current upper age limit. By extending the age range, we can potentially identify breast cancers in older adults at an earlier stage, leading to improved treatment outcomes and quality of life.

Similarly, decreasing the minimum age for breast cancer screening recognizes that breast cancer can occur in younger individuals, although at a relatively lower incidence. Lowering the age limit for screening can help identify breast cancer cases that might otherwise be missed, especially in individuals with a higher risk due to family history or genetic factors.

Recommendation 4: That the government allocate resources to adjust and expand breast cancer screening guidelines, including increasing the maximum age and decreasing the minimum age for routine screenings.



Charting a Compassionate Course

A national cancer patient navigation system would help address the challenges cancer patients often face when trying to navigate the healthcare system. This system would provide personalized guidance and support, helping individuals understand their treatment options, facilitating timely access to healthcare services, and ensuring continuity of care throughout their cancer journey. Moreover, it would play a vital role in overcoming language barriers that can hinder effective communication and access to appropriate care for diverse populations.

The establishment of a national cancer patient navigation system would involve developing standardized guidelines and training for patient navigators, allocating funding for staffing and infrastructure, and establishing partnerships between healthcare providers, patient advocacy groups, and community organizations. By collaborating with existing cancer support networks and leveraging technological advancements, such as telehealth and digital platforms, the system can reach a broader population and provide efficient and accessible support.

Recommendation 5: That the government advocate for the creation of a comprehensive and centralized national cancer patient navigation system.



Strengthening Healthcare for Cancer Patients Amidst COVID-19

The Canada Health Transfer plays a pivotal role in supporting provincial healthcare systems, especially during times of crisis. As the backlog of cancer patients caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose significant challenges to the healthcare system, it is crucial to provide additional financial resources to address this issue effectively.

By advocating for an increase in CHT Payments to provinces, Canada can take decisive action to alleviate the strain on healthcare facilities, expedite cancer-related procedures, and ensure timely access to diagnosis and treatment for cancer patients. This increase will empower provinces to enhance their healthcare capacity, reduce wait times, and bolster support for cancer patients throughout their journey.

CCSN encourages the use of the CHT payments for the following initiatives:

1. *Expedited Cancer Screenings and Diagnostics*: Allocate funds to facilitate increased cancer screenings and diagnostic procedures to ensure early detection and prompt initiation of treatment for patients.
2. *Surgical and Treatment Capacity Expansion*: Invest in additional resources, including healthcare professionals, medical equipment, and hospital infrastructure, to boost surgical and treatment capacity and reduce wait times.
3. *Virtual Healthcare Services*: Direct a portion of the increased funding towards expanding telemedicine and virtual healthcare services, which will enable remote consultations and follow-ups, minimizing the need for in-person visits and reducing the risk of infection.
4. *Support for Mental Health and Well-being*: Dedicate resources to enhance mental health support services for cancer patients, recognizing the psychological toll the pandemic has taken on their well-being.
5. *Regional Outreach and Accessibility*: Allocate funds to improve accessibility and outreach efforts in underserved regions, ensuring equitable access to cancer care for all Canadians.

Collaboration with provincial health authorities, cancer patient advocacy groups, and healthcare professionals is essential in formulating a comprehensive strategy that addresses the unique challenges faced by cancer patients during this backlog. By working together, we can develop a targeted approach that maximizes the impact of the increased CHT Payments and supports the health and well-being of cancer patients across the country.

Recommendation 6: That the government implement a 15% increase in the Canada Health Transfer, bringing the total amount to \$56,834,200,000, to provide vital support in addressing the backlog of cancer services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.