



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in
Advance of the 2019 Budget
Submitted by the Canadian Cancer Society**

List of Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the federal government continue to support a bold vision for a pan-Canadian cancer control strategy with the commitment to sustain or increase funding to continue to address the challenges facing the cancer care system.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the federal government contribute \$10 million to CCS's cancer information and support services in order for Canadians to continue to have access to personalized and highly responsive information and support.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the federal government expand the Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit to 26 weeks.

About Us

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer. Over the last 80 years, CCS has been a champion of healthcare improvements and innovation. As Canada's largest health charity, we fund world-class research, advocate for strong health policy, and help people with cancer and their families by providing evidence-based information on cancer-related issues. We are ready to work in partnership with the Government of Canada, and all Members of Parliament to make the recommendations in this document a reality.

Executive Summary

CCS is pleased to see the federal government implementing a strong health agenda that includes world-class plain packaging legislation and regulations, investments in the Healthy Seniors Pilot Project, efforts to improve affordability and access to prescription medications, continued investments in health research, in addition to many other important health issues facing Canadians.

In 2017 alone, 206,200 new cancer cases were diagnosed and 80,800 deaths from cancer occurred in Canada.¹ Although an increasing number of Canadians are surviving at least five years past their cancer diagnosis, cancer continues to be the leading cause of death in Canada. About 1 in 4 Canadians are expected to die from cancer.² In this current landscape, the federal government must continue to implement its health agenda, with a stronger focus on preventing cancer and other life-threatening diseases and on improving the lives of people with cancer and their families by addressing the gaps in cancer care, support and information services.

CCS recommends that the federal government take the following steps in Budget 2019 to improve the lives of people and families touched by cancer:

- That the federal government continue to support a bold vision for a pan-Canadian cancer control strategy with the commitment to sustain or increase funding to continue to address the challenges facing the cancer care system.
- That the federal government contribute \$10 million to the CCS's cancer information and support services in order for Canadians to continue to have access to personalized and highly responsive information and support.
- That the federal government expand the Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit to 26 weeks.

Cancer, a nationwide health and economic challenge: the status quo is no longer an option

With 1 in 2 Canadians expected to develop cancer in their lifetime and over 800,000 Canadians living with cancer today, there is a critical need to provide additional support for people living with cancer and their families. Cancer 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

As the pan-Canadian cancer authority, provider of services for all cancer types in every province, and the voice of people with cancer, CCS wants to work with the federal government to create a country in which no Canadian fears cancer. We make the following recommendations as part of Budget 2019:

Recommendation 1: Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control

The Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control (CSCC), established in 2006, following a call to action by CCS, was developed to maximize the development, translation of knowledge and expertise across Canada of cancer information. Having called for and helped to develop the first national cancer control plan, and as the current national leader to represent people with cancer and their families, we strongly recommend the continued support of the CSCC.

At the time of the establishment of the CSCC, there were inadequate mechanisms in place for coordinating action, sharing learning and distributing best practices to policy-makers, health professionals, people with cancer, and the community at large. As a result of the CSCC, colorectal cancer screening programs are in place or planned in all 10 provinces and one territory, with national quality indicators to track, compare and improve the screening programs.

The CSCC is currently being renewed to address the new challenges facing Canada's cancer care system. CCS supports the need to update the CSCC to respond to new health priorities such as the national dialogue on pharmacare, palliative care and a response to the growing aging population. We recommend that the renewed CSCC include a collective approach to improving palliative care access for all Canadians through the implementation of the national palliative care framework and allocated funding for the framework. It is vital that the CCS participate in the evolution of the CSCC.

CCS recommends that the federal government continue to support a bold vision for a pan-Canadian cancer control strategy with the commitment to sustain or increase funding to continue to address the challenges facing the cancer care system. Any future strategy should be implemented with a pan-Canadian approach with organizations of relevant experience.

Recommendation 2: Support for cancer information and support services

There is significant evidence demonstrating the importance of information and support for people diagnosed with cancer. For example, according to the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer report, *Living with Cancer: A Report on the Patient Experience*⁴, while people touched by cancer might be well treated, many people with cancer need greater support to address the physical, emotional and psychosocial side effects of the disease. Results from the *Experiences of Cancer Patients in Transition Study*, a survey examining the experiences of 13,000 Canadians, demonstrate that 8 in ten cancer survivors reported having at least one emotional challenge one to three years post-treatment. The most reported emotional symptoms included: anxiety, stress and worry about cancer returning (67.7%); depression, sadness or less of interest in everyday things (46.3%); and changes in sexual intimacy (41.7%).⁵ CCS helps to address the mental health needs of people living with cancer, survivors and their families.

On any given day, 34,200 Canadians will reach out to CCS for trusted information and caring support. Our services, available to all Canadians coast to coast, cover a range of topics that address the full person and the emotional, physical and practical needs of Canadians, from the date of diagnosis through to survivorship. These are services that almost 70% of people living with cancer require; yet the health system does not address these needs in a consistent and meaningful way. It is this sizable gap that CCS works tirelessly to fill every day. Our information is available in English and French, and in 150 languages, including 14 Indigenous languages, by phone through an interpreter service. CCS's unique combination of our best-in-class services, partnerships and collaborations with healthcare providers, communities, people living with cancer and caregivers are an opportunity to utilize for the federal government.

To help meet the growing demand for information and support and improve the quality of life for people living with cancer and their families, **CCS recommends that the federal government contribute \$10 million to the CCS's cancer information and support services in order for Canadians to continue to have access to personalized and highly responsive information and support.**

Recommendation 3: Expand the Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit

When Canadians face cancer, their struggle is not just medical, but also financial. In addition to a decrease in income, Canadians with cancer also face a rise in expenses: medications, the cost of medical travel, parking, home care costs, etc. The stress of financial burdens experienced by people with cancer impacts their emotional well-being and, therefore, their psycho-social needs. The Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit which is currently structured as 15 weeks of coverage, does not adequately cover the length of treatment for many people with cancer.

As Canadians live longer, with longer careers, more people are likely to develop a chronic condition while in the workforce.⁶ With the 2016 extension of the Compassionate Care Benefit (from six weeks to 26 weeks), caregivers have access to a longer period of EI support than an individual who is facing a disease as serious as cancer. The number of claimants of the Compassionate Care Benefit increased by 29.5% this past year.⁷ The extension of the Compassionate Care Benefit has made caregiving responsibilities less of a financial burden to families in Canada, it is time to also alleviate this burden on people with cancer. **CCS recommends that the government address this inconsistency by expanding the Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit to up to 26 weeks.** A solution must be found in which all stakeholders can agree to the expansion of the sickness benefit and ensure Canadian workers and businesses remain competitive.

¹ Canadian Cancer Society. (June 2018). *Canadian Cancer Statistics: A 2018 Special Report on cancer incidence by stage*.

Retrieved:

<http://www.cancer.ca/~media/cancer.ca/CW/cancer%20information/cancer%20101/Canadian%20cancer%20statistics/Canadian-Cancer-Statistics-2018-EN.pdf?la=en>

² *Ibid.*

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

⁴ Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. (January 2018). *Living with Cancer: A Report on the Patient Experience*. Retrieved:

<https://www.partnershipagaincancer.ca/news/news-events/groundbreaking-report-canadian-cancer-care-patient-perspective/>

⁵ Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. (March 2018). *Experiences of Cancer Patients in Transition Study: Emotional Challenges*. p.4. Retrieved:

https://content.cancerview.ca/download/cv/quality_and_planning/system_performance/documents/experiences_cancer_patients_transition_study_emotional_challenges_en?attachment=0

⁶ Public Policy Forum. (September 2017). *Condition Chronic: How improving workplace wellness helps Canadians and the economy*. Retrieved: <https://www.pforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Condition-Chronic-Report-EN.pdf>

⁷ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2016-2017). *Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report 2016/2017*.

Retrieved: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/monitoring2017.html>