



**Canadian Patient Safety Institute**  
**Submission to the House of Commons Finance Committee**  
**Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2018 Federal Budget**

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*Safe care...accepting no less*  
*Soins sécuritaires...n'acceptons rien de moins*

[www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca](http://www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca)  
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Established by Health Canada in 2003, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI) works with governments, health organizations, leaders, and healthcare providers to inspire extraordinary improvement in patient safety and quality.

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## Introduction

### **What if Canada had the safest healthcare in the world?**

Some Canadians might think we've already achieved this milestone – the reality is, we're far from it. According to a July 2017 report from the Commonwealth Fund<sup>i</sup>, Canada's healthcare performance record ranks 9th out of 11 western countries; a score that reflects this country's poor healthcare performance indicators which includes quality and patient safety measures.

### **Canada is facing a patient safety crisis that requires immediate action.**

Patients experienced harm in more than 138,000 hospitalizations in Canada in 2014–2015, and 1 in 5 of these hospitalizations involved more than 1 occurrence of harm. We also know, 1 out of 18 hospital visits results in preventable harm or even death<sup>ii</sup>. It's no better in the community – up to 13% of Canadians receiving home care experience a harmful adverse event like a fall or medication error<sup>iii</sup>. Preventable harm has had, and continues to have, a significant personal impact on many Canadians – it's also had a significant impact on our healthcare system and our economy.

Fortunately, the federal government has committed to resolving the patient safety crisis. In December 2003, Health Canada officially announced funding for the Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI) with a mandate to provide national leadership on developing evidence-based tools and resources to educate and inspire safer care. CPSI was established as the result of a rallying cry led by dedicated individuals committed to working within the healthcare system to ensure that no patient is ever harmed.

Through CPSI's work, improvements to patient safety have been achieved; hospitals and other care centers are notably safer than they were a decade ago. Public awareness of medication safety, infection prevention and control, surgical care safety and patient safety best practices is higher among care providers, healthcare leaders, and the public. Provincial and territorial (P/T) governments are better equipped to introduce new patient safety methods into hospitals and to home care providers. However, despite these gains, investment by the federal government has not kept pace with the significant challenges facing Canada's healthcare system, nor with the impact of those challenges on patient safety.

CPSI has done great work, but the challenges in achieving a breakthrough in patient safety improvement are now better understood. Our work needs to transition to a broader scale to lead a pan-Canadian effort which will enable us to achieve the safest healthcare system in the world. Budget 2018 presents a compelling opportunity for the federal government to invest in new patient safety strategies that are results-oriented, proven effective and have broad support from provincial and territorial governments.

## The issue

CPSI's core mission is to ensure that Canada has the safest healthcare in the world. We work with governments, health organizations, healthcare providers and patients to introduce innovative practices that achieve improvements in patient safety and quality.

CPSI was established following a report from the National Steering Committee on Patient Safety. The organization is a multidisciplinary group consisting of clinical, academic, and administrative experts in the fields of safety and healthcare from across Canada. The purpose of CPSI is identifying best new practices and technologies, and spreading that knowledge through education and collaboration.

While the federal government's investment has enabled CPSI to achieve some gains over the last fourteen years, this investment has fallen short of the resources needed to significantly reduce incidents of harm and to effectively measure outcomes. CPSI has provided great value for the federal government's ongoing \$7.6 million investment. However, given its size and the levers available at its disposal, CPSI does not have the resources to effectively achieve its mission in a highly diffused \$228 billion healthcare system.

## *Preventable harm in healthcare has a significant impact on Canadians and the economy*

### **The aggregate cost of patient safety incidents to Canada's economy is significant and can't be ignored.**

Preventable patient safety incidents are devastating to the patient, care providers and families. Patient harm is also felt in the broader economy through lost capacity and productivity of patients and their caregivers. Costs are felt by large and small businesses when employees and families must take time away from work. Patient harm also manifests directly in the need for additional treatment, more diagnostic testing, re-admission to hospital or prolonged hospital stay, and other, additional use of Canada's scarce healthcare resources.

Soon-to-be released Canadian data notes that, over the next 30 years, there could be 400,000 annual cases of patient safety incidents, generating an additional \$2.75 billion in healthcare costs per year, or around \$6,800 per patient<sup>iv</sup>.

In the acute care setting, infections will be the biggest driver of patient safety incidents, accounting for roughly 70,000 incidents per year on average – generating an additional \$480 million per year in healthcare costs. Traumas (e.g., falls) will be the biggest driver of incidents in the home care setting, accounting for roughly 115,000 incidents per year. The emergency room, and hospital costs associated with trauma events, amounts to approximately \$860 million per year<sup>iv</sup>.

## **The solution**

CPSI's current funding agreement ends in March, 2018. To fulfill CPSI's vision – that Canada provides the safest healthcare in the world - and bring about the transformation in patient safety and quality care that health providers, healthcare leaders, patients, and Canadians are counting on, CPSI requires a renewed federal funding commitment.

### **Patient safety must be the core business of healthcare.**

A recent report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concluded that a greater investment in patient safety and prevention is justified by savings which are achieved through a reduction in patient harm<sup>v</sup>. The report noted that many adverse events can be systematically prevented through better policy and practice, with the cost of prevention typically much lower than the cost of harm.

A significant resource burden resulting from patient harm can be reduced through strategic investment in safety improvement. We know that many adverse events can be systematically prevented through better data, public awareness, improvements to policy and practice, and capacity building, and further that, the cost of patient safety improvement and prevention is proven to be much lower than the cost of harm.

## *Investment in Patient Safety is proven to reduce costs & improve care*

Budget 2018 presents an important opportunity for the Government of Canada to bring real change to the way patients and families experience healthcare. By renewing its commitment to patient safety through a costed investment of \$50 million in CPSI, the government will directly influence higher-quality, safer care for all Canadians and in turn, reduce the economic and societal burden of preventable patient harm.

***CPSI asks that the House of Commons Finance Committee support the required investment of \$50 million per year for five years to sustain the Canadian Patient Safety Institute's bold new vision for a Pan-Canadian patient safety and healthcare quality improvement.***

## The rationale

**CPSI recognizes that to have an impact, we must move beyond a focus on direct clinical intervention to a system-wide strategy that will have an immediate impact on patient safety and healthcare quality improvement.**

Over the past four years, CPSI has begun this shift toward new safety improvement techniques. We've worked to achieve an unprecedented level of system collaboration, create and embed competencies more deeply within the system, and guided practitioners not only to understand what techniques should be adopted, but how to sustain behavioural and culture change at different levels. Through CPSI's work, Health Canada and provincial health authorities are better able to meet the most critical patient safety issues including opioid misuse, home care safety, falls prevention and engagement of Canada's aboriginal communities.

### *A new and innovative approach to patient safety improvement*

With the needed funding, CPSI will develop and lead system strategies to ensure safe healthcare by demonstrating successful strategies and strengthening the commitment to patient safety among provincial health authorities. With enhanced funding CPSI will:

**1. Improve patient safety reporting and performance measures.** CPSI understands that to improve healthcare at the P/T level, we must work in partnership to incorporate safety measurement and reporting into P/T activities.

*Funding will enable CPSI to:*

- Strengthen commitment to transparency and safe care through new policies, regulations, and accreditation.
- Develop a comprehensive framework that enables public reporting of harm and transparency at all levels.

**2. Develop concrete strategies to scale and spread patient safety improvement knowledge.** Our expertise working with P/T and local healthcare providers across Canada has shown that better data and new patient safety performance measurement, evaluation, and improvement methods, will enable CPSI to embed patient safety improvement techniques that are proven to be successful across the broad continuum of care.

*Funding will enable CPSI to:*

- Introduce innovative patient safety initiatives which will enable us to align policy, regulation, and measurement across the country.
- Develop and promote team-based strategies that are imbedded in curricula across health disciplines and give front line providers the tools needed to improve the delivery of care in hospitals, long term care, ambulatory and home care settings.

**3. Engage Canadians.** Over the past fourteen years, CPSI has worked closely with patients, providers, healthcare leaders and governments. This experience has taught us that change can only occur through collaboration. It's also clear that CPSI needs to increase the profile of patient safety by expanding our awareness efforts and engaging new audiences.

*Funding will enable CPSI to:*

- Promote prevention and safety programs with more Canadians; we will ensure that patients are equipped with the knowledge to ask their caregivers the right questions.

## Through an investment of \$50 Million per year, CPSI will ensure that:

- Canada is in the top quintile on the OECD ranking for patient safety
- All provinces and territories are reporting patient safety alerts
- The incident management continuum is completed for all patient safety alerts
- Every patient will receive 5 questions to ask when receiving medication
- The magnitude of harm will be among the top priorities of governments
- Poor and great performers in key areas of patient safety will be identified
- All jurisdictions will report the most serious patient safety incidents, called Never Events
- Baseline measures for patient safety issues will be established, including those agreed upon with provinces

## Conclusion

### **It's time to get serious about Patient Safety!**

We no longer expect *status quo* funding to meet the overwhelming and significant challenges to patient safety existing in our healthcare system, and affecting Canadians. We know what needs to be done to ensure that no Canadian is ever harmed by the system they trust to care for them. We also know that it's possible to make Canada's healthcare system the safest in the world.

As policy makers in all jurisdictions, healthcare administrators and elected officials are called on to make difficult decisions about where to invest money. Canada's healthcare leaders and patients agree, that the work of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute is essential for preventing harm from happening, responding to harm when it does happen and learning from harm so that it doesn't happen again.

Canadians deserve no less!

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<sup>i</sup> E. C. Schneider, D. O. Sarnak, D. Squires, A. Shah, and M. M. Doty, *Mirror, Mirror 2017: International Comparison Reflects Flaws and Opportunities for Better U.S. Healthcare*, The Commonwealth Fund, July 2017

<sup>ii</sup> CPSI, CIHI, *Measuring Patient Harm in Canadian Hospitals*, October 2016

<sup>iii</sup> *Safety at Home: A Pan-Canadian Home Care Study*, CPSI, 2013

<sup>iv</sup> *The Case for Investing in Patient Safety in Canada*, RiskAnalytica, Fall 2017

<sup>v</sup> Slawomirski1, Auraaen1 & Klazinga1, *The economics of patient safety Strengthening a value-based approach to reducing patient harm at national level*, OECD June 2017