

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2020
Budget**

**By: Ronald McDonald
House Charities Canada**

List of Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** That the federal government establish a partnership with Ronald McDonald House Charities Canada, providing capital funding to expand its footprint and impact to families, enabling it to:
 - Meet rising demand to support sick children and their families, while incorporating sustainable building design principles
 - Increase health accessibility for Canadian children, including in northern and remote areas
 - Improve health outcomes and patient experience for pediatric patients and their families

Keeping Families Close: Helping Ronald McDonald House Charities Grow

Families heal better when they are together.

The worst thing that can happen to a parent is to learn that their child is sick and needs to be hospitalized. Suddenly, their life stops overnight, and they enter a world of worry and fear.

As health care advances, pediatric care is often regionalized in centres of excellence and the best experts for any given condition are often unavailable in a family's local community. The harsh reality is that 65% of Canadians live outside a city with a children's hospital, making travel to obtain the health care their child needs essential.

Families often travel hundreds of kilometers for treatment and are faced with financial demands, job insecurity, and a healing journey that can take months, or even years.

This is where Ronald McDonald House Charities of Canada (RMHC) steps in to help. We serve families across Canada at our Ronald McDonald Houses, Ronald McDonald Family Rooms, and Ronald McDonald Care Mobiles.

RMHC programs offer much more than accommodation. They provide families with meals, activities, peer support, support for siblings, respite, laundry, and many other services to take care of families.

Yet 7,242 families were turned away last year because we were full. RMHC will not stop until every family in need has a place to stay while their sick child is being treated in hospital.

As we strive to meet the needs of Canadian families who find themselves in the difficult and unexpected place of having a sick child, RMHC's funding needs continue to grow. In 2010, RMHC had 12 RMHC Houses in 7 provinces across Canada providing 217 bedrooms for families. Our annual cost to operate across Canada was approximately \$5.6 million.

As of 2018, RMHC has grown to 15 RMHC Houses, 16 RMHC Family Rooms, and 1 RMHC Care Mobile, and we operate across Canada, serving 26,471 families, through 509 bedrooms, at an annual operating cost of over \$29 million per year.

This growth would not have been possible without the support of our partners, including our founding and forever partner, McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd., and a broad network of corporate and individual donors across Canada.

In 2011-12, the Government of Canada, through the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, was a key partner in our expansion providing capital funding to help build and expand Ronald McDonald Houses in Toronto, Hamilton, and Southwestern (London) Ontario.

As we look to the future, RMHC requires continued investment to meet growing demand. Between 2019 and 2023, our estimated minimum capital growth investment across Canada will be over \$60 million. This will enable us to grow to over 700 bedrooms, while incorporating sustainable building design into our Houses and Family Rooms.

Through a capital funding partnership, the federal government can help ensure that even more Canadian families with a sick or injured child receive the support they need during a most critical time.

Staying Close is What Matters Most

When a child becomes sick, the whole family hurts. Our goal is to keep families of sick children close; close to each other and close to the care that they need.

In family-centered care, all aspects of care are oriented towards supporting and involving the family with the goal of improving quality, psychological well-being, clinical outcomes, and the overall patient and family experience. Evidence shows that keeping families both physically and emotionally close improves the quality and experience of the care of the child and the well-being of the family, while reducing the family's stress, sense of isolation, and financial burden.

As pediatric care has become centralized in children's hospitals, travel to obtain pediatric specialty care becomes necessary for families and can become a source of emotional and financial stress for families. Even when care is available locally, families still face needs that go beyond the direct care of their child, including care and support for siblings.

This is where RMHC fills the gap. Our Houses provide a caring and supportive environment for the families of seriously ill children undergoing treatment. Ronald McDonald Family Rooms provide a place for families to rest and recharge, right inside the hospital.

Our Impact on Families

Better Health Outcomes & Family Well-Being

- Research suggests that better decisions are made by medical staff and treatment adherence is better in families staying near the hospital¹
- Parents who slept in the child's hospital room had poorer sleep than parents who slept at a Ronald McDonald House²
- A survey of 10 Ontario hospitals found that families who stayed at a Ronald McDonald House reported greater involvement in their child's care compared with other accommodation types³
- Nearby, purpose-built accommodations which include family, peer-to-peer and other support services can help improve the quality of the hospital experience for families⁴

Alleviating Financial Burden for Families

The financial burden of having a child diagnosed with a serious illness is immense. Research has demonstrated the potentially catastrophic financial burden that families face due to direct costs related to travel and accommodation, as well as mounting medical expenses, often without the support of work.

¹ Accommodation in Pediatric Oncology: Parental Experiences, Preferences and Unmet Needs. Walker G et al., Rural and Remote Health, 2005

² Ronald McDonald House Charities is Keeping Families Close: A Unique Role in Family-Centred Care, Rubin N, 2018

³ The Influence of Family Accommodation on Pediatric Hospital Experience in Canada, Franck LS et al, BMC Health Services Research, 2017

⁴ The Child and Family Hospital Experience: Is it Influenced by Family Accommodation?, Franck LS et al., Medical Care Research and Review, 2015

RMHC programs help to alleviate the costs families face by providing affordable accommodation close to or inside hospitals. Families pay just \$11.50 on average per night, if they can afford it and no family is turned away for their inability to pay. Collectively, it is estimated that annually these programs saved Canadian families \$45 million in unexpected costs related to their child's illness.⁵

Connecting Indigenous Canadians to the Health Care They Need

RMHC is committed to serving all families and understanding the diversity, uniqueness and beauty of all cultures. In Saskatchewan, over 50% of the families we serve are from an Indigenous or Metis background and this proportion is even greater in the Prince Albert Family Room. In Manitoba, 55% of pediatric patients are from Indigenous communities and RHMC Manitoba served 406 families from Northern Manitoba in 2018 which represented 19% of overall families served.

RMHC chapters in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta have implemented partnerships and strategies to meet the needs of Indigenous families. Our chapters have ensured board and staff representation of Indigenous or Metis members, implemented cultural awareness and sensitivity training, including blanket exercise workshops and elder sharing, to share and learn from these communities and ensure that our Houses feel like home for each family.

Partners in Healing

By caring for the family, RMHC has become ingrained in the fabric of Canada's pediatric health care system. Our national partners help children receive the medical care they need, and their families are supported and actively involved every step of the way. We would like to work with the federal government to continue to build so that every child, and every family, receives the care they need.

Through partnership with the federal government, we can ensure that our health care system delivers the best outcome for all children in need. Capital funding will enable expansion of our Houses, increase the number of Family Rooms, and reach more children and families in northern and remote communities through the Care Mobile in Alberta.

We are dedicated to the Ronald McDonald House families, who are the reasons why we do what we do, and we invite the federal government to join us in our mission to support Canadian families with sick children when they need us the most.

⁵ RBC Economic Impact Study, 2019

RMHC Commitment on the Environment

RMHC acknowledges that all Canadians have a role to play in reducing our carbon emissions and supports the Standing Committee on Finance's pre-budget theme of "Climate Emergency: The Required Transition to a Low Carbon Economy". For RMHC, this includes not just our day-to-day activities but foundational issues such as how our Houses are built and how our Family Rooms are structured.

Our Vision 2020 program is pushing for:

- 20% increase in energy efficiency across our RMHC family;
- 20% reduction in water use per family night in our programs;
- 100% of RMHC programs with waste management programs in place, and;
- All new program construction will incorporate sustainable building design principles.

RMHC is very proud that our houses in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal and St. John's have all received LEED certification with our Vancouver and Toronto houses obtaining LEED Gold recognition. In addition, RMHC takes action to ensure our houses and family rooms help save energy, such as using programmable thermostats. This not only results in lower operating costs which allows us to redirect funds to family-centered care, but also helps to reduce our emissions.

As per our Vision 2020 program, all of RMHC's houses offer waste diversion programs including recycling and composting, and we have installed low flow showerheads and low flush toilets to reduce water usage in our facilities.

We believe these actions are important because it allows RMHC to be a positive force in deepening the impact of our programs, stewarding donor investments, protecting and preserving the environment, and supporting healthy communities.

About Ronald McDonald House Charities

The vision of Ronald McDonald House Charities is a world where all children have access to medical care, and that their families are supported so that they can be actively involved in the child's care. RMHC Canada and its 12 regional chapters fulfill this mission through operation of sustainable programs that enable family-centered care, bridge access to quality health care, are a vital part of the health care continuum, and strengthen families during difficult times.

Ronald McDonald Houses

Ronald McDonald Houses are the cornerstone of RMHC Canada. All our Houses provide families with private bedrooms, professionally equipped kitchens, laundry facilities, and playrooms for kids and their siblings. Additional services, like accredited education programs, special suites for children with suppressed immune systems, recreational activities, non-clinical support services, and sibling support services are also available depending on the House.

There are currently 15 Ronald McDonald Houses across Canada.

Ronald McDonald Family Rooms

Ronald McDonald Family Rooms give families a medical-free space in the hospital where they can take a break from the day-to-day noise of the hospital, but still be just seconds away from their child's bedside, offering local and out-of-town families a calm and supportive place to rest.

There are currently 17 Family Rooms operating in hospitals across Canada.

Ronald McDonald Care Mobiles

Ronald McDonald Care Mobiles fill a critical gap in health care provision in Alberta, bringing mobile medical services to some of the most vulnerable and high-needs children and youth in the province.

RMHC Alberta's Care Mobile serve over 2,800 children and their families in East Calgary and on the Siksika First Nations Reserve. The need for Care Mobile services continues to grow.



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