



December 3, 2020

Dear Provincial Health Officer Henry,

The signatories to this letter, a network of patient organizations across Canada, are writing to you in advance of your forthcoming meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau to urge him to increase the Canada Health Transfer payments.

We are in strong support of these efforts. The Canada Health Transfer payments have been woefully inadequate for many years. As you well know, they were decreased significantly during the Harper government's years in Office and were not increased after Prime Minister Trudeau took Office.

The pandemic has unquestionably created an unprecedented crisis for health care systems and health care delivery, both directly as a result of the virus and indirectly as a result of its impact on the mental and physical well-being of people in Canada. In addition, health care delivery for diseases and disabilities unrelated to COVID, even those that are life threatening, has been severely curtailed, delayed and, in many cases, even cancelled entirely.

It is no exaggeration to say that this pandemic has pushed our health care system to its breaking point, and perhaps even passed that point.

Even before the pandemic, people in Canada were worried about the ability of our health systems to provide adequate levels of health care, including in the area of oncology represented by the signatories to this letter. Cancers are the leading cause of death for people in Canada.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that 62,000 people have died from some type of cancer over the period of this pandemic to date in this country.<sup>2</sup> A huge backlog of cancer diagnoses and care has, and is still, taking place, and some diagnostic, treatment and other important cancer care services have been cancelled due to the pandemic.

For every month that a person with cancer has treatment delayed, the risk of death is increased by 6% to 13 %.<sup>3</sup>

There is no question that this virus has created a widespread public health emergency, both nationally and globally. This pandemic has also revealed the dangerous shortfalls

in the preparedness of our overburdened health care system to manage the needs of existing patient populations.

We must not create an additional public health crisis in cancer in the wake of the current crisis.

We strongly urge the Premiers to impress upon the Prime Minister the gravity of the situation in cancer, a disease that will strike one in every two people living in Canada and will kill one in four people this year alone.<sup>2</sup>

It is, therefore, imperative to ensure that the Canada Health Transfer payment increases allocate sufficient funding not only to recognize this reality and address it but also to meet the needs of all people in Canada requiring health care services in the increased health budget. This budget must also take into account aging populations, diversity and social determinants of health. The discrete needs of Indigenous populations must also be addressed.

The signatories to this letter have specific recommendations about the allocation of these funds that we will be pleased to share with you once they have been secured.

This is an ideal opportunity for the federal government to work with provincial and territorial governments across the country to ensure that people living in Canada can access a better healthcare system as we rebuild from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours truly,

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Martine Elias, Executive Director, Myeloma Canada  
Barry Stein, President, Colorectal Cancer Canada  
Christine Collins, Executive Director, Kidney Cancer Canada  
Christina Sit, Program Manager, Lung Cancer Canada  
John-Peter Bradford, Chief Executive Officer, Life-Saving Therapies Network (LSTN)  
Jackie Herman, President, Canadian Neuroendocrine Tumour Society (CNETS)  
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MJ DeCoteau, Founder and Executive Director, Rethink Breast Cancer  
David Josephy, President, GIST Sarcoma Life Raft Group Canada  
Stephanie Michaud, President and Chief Executive Officer, BioCanRx  
Antonella Rizza, Chief Executive Officer, Lymphoma Canada  
Jackie Manthorne, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Cancer Survivor Network (CCSN)  
Rachael Manion, Executive Director, Canadian Skin Patient Alliance  
Eva Villalba, Executive Director, Coalition priorité cancer au Québec/Quebec Cancer Coalition  
CONNECTed, a network of 8 National Cancer Groups including paediatric cancer

## References:

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