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Canadian Cancer Society Submission to the Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs: Study on Economic and Fiscal Update Act,
2020 and the Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis on Certain Sectors of the
Economy

August 2020



More than 1 million Canadians are living with and beyond cancer. Those with cancer are among the most vulnerable in our communities right now and may be at greater risk of more serious outcomes from COVID-19. While the immediate impact of COVID-19 on cancer patients is easy to understand, the long-term effects will be equally devastating. As Ontario begins to resume services, there will be a significant backlog to our healthcare system with cancer patients who have gone untreated, hopeful their cancer hasn't spread.

As the only national charitable organization that supports Ontarians with all cancers in communities across the province, Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) programs help support people with and beyond cancer through this challenging time. Now more than ever, our online and phone support programs are critical to the people we serve, providing information, reducing anxiety, limiting feelings of isolation and making sure Ontarians in every corner of the province can still get to and from their cancer appointments with our transportation support programs.

Since the outbreak began, there is a significant need for CCS's live chat services, toll-free helpline and online peer support community, cancerconnection.ca, which is moderated by CCS staff to ensure no question goes unanswered. These programs help people find community and connection from the comfort and safety of their own home. Consistently, almost 50% of clients receiving our services are seniors. Almost 60% of all new cancer diagnoses and 75% of all cancer deaths occur in seniors.

Unfortunately, just as our programs are needed more than ever, we are facing our greatest financial challenge in our over 80-year history. In a normal year, CCS raises almost \$180 million in total revenue. Overall, we estimate that the COVID-19 crisis will result in a decline in donations for CCS of between \$80M-\$100M over the next year nationwide, a loss of 44% - 55% from our annual budget. In April alone, we lost \$20.3 M in revenue. While federal and provincial initiatives to date have brought some relief, CCS falls through the cracks of several of these programs while others simply do not provide nearly enough to offset our historic loss of revenue.

The Canadian Cancer Society supports the Ontario Nonprofit Network's request for a \$680M stabilization fund that is adequate to address the urgent needs of the non-profit sector. Attached as **Appendix One** is a letter to the Minister of Health, sent in May with the support of over 20 leading health charities in Ontario, supporting a stabilization fund and proposing additional measures to support charities and non-profits through this difficult time. Additional measures in this letter included, program funding for organizations that service vulnerable populations, changes to the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program to work for charities, and a government commitment to match donations to charities.



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Specifically, the Canadian Cancer Society requests an increase in government transfer payments to the Canadian Cancer Society to deliver the Wheels of Hope Transportation program. This program provides door to door service to and from a cancer appointment for those that need it in every corner of the province. Last year, the Wheels of Hope 1,400 strong volunteer workforce helped 8,380 cancer patients take over 150,000 rides to treatment. Our volunteers drove over 8,200,000 km – the equivalent of over 19 one-way trips to the moon. Attached as **Appendix Two** is a proposal outlining the government support requested to help CCS re-launch this program and continue to ensure people can access the care they need.

Contact Information

For further details or to schedule a meeting to discuss this proposal in greater detail, please contact Stephen Piazza, Ontario Manager of Advocacy at Stephen.piazza@cancer.ca/ 647-233-6793.



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Appendix One: Health Charities Letter to Minister of Health



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Société
canadienne
du cancer

B R E A T H E
the lung association

R E S P I R E Z
l'association pulmonaire



Heart & Stroke Foundation
Fondation des maladies du cœur et de l'AVC

DIABETES
CANADA

May 7, 2020

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
5th floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Minister Elliott:

As representatives of Ontario's charitable health sector, we are writing to you with an urgent appeal for a stabilization fund for the province's nonprofit organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a fundamental threat to our continued ability to fundraise successfully and therefore, to deliver on our core missions to invest in research, provide supports and services to our constituents across the province and to engage in health promotion education to reduce the risks of the diseases and conditions we are committed to fight. The survival of our organizations is at stake.

This is at a time when the evidence is mounting that the individuals affected by many of these diseases and conditions are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection or of more severe outcomes if infected. The demand for our services is increasing and the education, resources, supports and services that we provide to these vulnerable Ontarians is more critical now than ever before.

Beyond the urgent need for our programs, our sector represents a significant part of Ontario's economy. One third of the country's nonprofit organizations are based in Ontario, with 1 million employees and an economic contribution of \$50 billion to the province's GDP. Those jobs and the economic contribution our organizations make to the province are already being lost.

Many of our organizations have already been forced to lay off significant numbers of employees – up to 70 percent in some cases. Even if we qualify, the federal government's emergency wage subsidy does not come close to making up for the shortfall in fundraising revenue. The recent announcement of the federal Emergency Community Support Fund will alleviate some of the pressure on organizations delivering frontline services, but it is a drop in the bucket in comparison to the immense revenue losses we have, and will continue to, experience.

What the charitable sector in Ontario requires is broad-based support that will ensure our survival and the ability to support Ontarians as we begin to recover from this pandemic. As health charities in Ontario, we recommend the following measures:



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- A non-profit sector stabilization fund that is adequate to address the urgent needs of the non-profit sector as an employer of one million Ontarians
- Program funding for organizations, such as ours, which provide peer support, information services, and psychosocial support for people from vulnerable populations, such as those with chronic illness and conditions and their caregivers
- Ensure the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program works for non-profits and charities renting properties in Ontario and provide additional assistance to offset overhead costs of transitioning staff to work from home
- Double the provincial portion of the Charitable Donation Tax Credit through to the end of 2021 and make the credit refundable so charitable contributions are treated the same as a contribution to a political party in Ontario
- Commit to matching donations from all Ontarians to provincial charities or national charities with provincial offices

We believe your government has an important role to play in supporting our organizations, particularly as the programs and services we deliver through donations help to reduce the burden placed on the health care system funded by the province. Support from the Government of Canada has been a start, but it has simply not gone far enough. Without help, Ontarians will feel the pain of the loss of our organizations for years to come, a scenario that has become all too likely over the last number of weeks.

This is an unprecedented crisis, and our organizations are responding in unprecedented ways. But we need your help. Representatives from our coalition will be following up with your office in the coming days to discuss how we may support your efforts to stabilize our sector.

Best regards,

Jeff Cornett
Executive Director, Ontario
Canadian Cancer Society

Terry Dean
President and CEO
Canadian Lung Association

Jake Reid
National Director, Government Relations
Diabetes Canada

Avril Goffredo
Executive Vice President, Ontario and Nunavut
Heart & Stroke



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Endorsers:



Alzheimer Society
ONTARIO



Hemophilia Ontario



OSTEOPOROSIS



c.c: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier
Members, Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee



Appendix Two: CCS Proposal for Ontario Government to Support the Wheels of Hope Relaunch

Support Access to Cancer Treatment for Ontarian Cancer Patients: \$2.5 million

Transportation to and from cancer care is a key challenge for access to equitable cancer services.¹ Across Ontario, the Canadian Cancer Society's (CCS) Wheels of Hope program has worked for 60 years to reduce the burden of transportation for patients and the cancer care system. Last year, the Wheels of Hope 1,400 strong volunteer workforce helped 8,380 cancer patients take over 150,000 rides to treatment, all over Ontario. Our volunteers drove over 8,200,000 km – the equivalent of over 19 one-way trips to the moon. The program cost approximately \$3.7 M to deliver in 2019. This includes a critical contribution of \$800,000 annually from the Ontario government that we have received for over 20 years, typically covering approximately 20% of the program costs.

To diversify funding in order to meet the growing need and rising costs of the program, CCS implemented an annual registration fee of \$100 in 2013. We continue to offer a compassionate program for those unable to pay the full registration fee and make every attempt to ensure no patient is denied a ride due to their inability to pay. In 2020, we also entered a partnership with the Honda Canada Foundation to provide seven vans for Ontario volunteers to use in lieu of their personal vehicle. The Honda vans allow us to transport several patients at a time, reduce the wear-and-tear on volunteer vehicles, and better manage vehicle sanitation between rides.

Request

At the outset of the pandemic, CCS suspended the Wheels of Hope program to protect our volunteer drivers and clients until steps could be taken to mitigate the risks of the virus. In the interim, we provided direct funding to patients to procure their own transportation. With the support of the Ontario government, we also pioneered a short-term partnership with Uber to support driving patients to appointments in limited areas of the province. The Uber partnership ended in July and direct funding of patient transportation is costly, and transports clients only a fraction of kilometers when compared to our volunteer driver program.

We hope to re-launch the Wheels of Hope program in Ontario as soon as possible to ensure people can get to their appointments as the province works through the backlog of postponed cancer treatments. With the re-launch of the program, we will look to continue offering limited direct funding to low-income patients travelling beyond what volunteer drivers can accommodate.

"If this program was not available, I would not have been guaranteed to have someone drive me. Taxis are far too expensive, bus transportation is awkward, with transfers and distance to the cancer centre, and the likelihood of having a family member available is never guaranteed to say the least. I really value this program as do many others." – WoH survey respondent

The annual \$800,000 investment from the Ontario government to the Wheels of Hope program continues to be crucial to its success but given the remainder of the program budget relies on charitable



donations, it simply is not sufficient to make up for our historic loss in revenue and financial hardship brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. While Ontarians need our programs and services now more than ever, CCS anticipates a \$100 M loss in revenue this year—losing \$20.3 M in April alone, due to cancelled or postponed long-standing fundraising events such as Daffodil Month, Relay for Life and Run for the Cure.

We request that the Ontario government immediately increase its total funding contribution to \$2.5 M (\$1.7 M increase from current levels) to help us meet the challenges brought on by COVID-19 and continue to help people get to their cancer appointments.

What does the evidence say?

In a 2018 survey of Wheels of Hope clients conducted by CCS, 61% indicated that they are somewhat or very likely to miss cancer-specific medical appointments if the program was unavailable. Reoccurring themes in the literature from Canada and other jurisdictions note that about 13-20% of patients report experiencing transportation barriers, and these were more common amongst patients that were experiencing pain as well as those that had no primary social support or non-spousal support.² Further, the 2018 Canadian Partnership Against Cancer *Living with Cancer* report found that difficulty travelling to treatments disrupts family lives and everyday routines, resulting in further strain on families coping with the cancer diagnosis of a loved one.³

"I can't say enough about your service – it literally saved my life. Without you guys, I wouldn't have been able to get to Juravinski and to Sunnybrook for my treatments and there's no way my husband would have been able to drive me every day and still work to provide for our family..." – WoH survey respondent

Helping those facing the greatest challenges

Transportation barriers are shown to predominantly affect the elderly, those living in rural or remote areas, First Nations, Inuit and Metis populations, racial and ethnic minorities, and patients with lower annual household income.⁴

Rural populations

Rural Ontarians living with cancer are at a disadvantage as they often face the financial burden of travelling to receive cancer treatment and are more likely to view the associated costs as an important consideration when making treatment decisions. In Ontario, nearly all 14-regional cancer centres are located in urban settings or regional hubs while servicing the surrounding rural areas. With an average one-way trip of 50 km, the Wheels of Hope program mitigates barriers for rural patients accessing their regional cancer centre by providing door to door transportation to treatment.

Seniors

Almost 60% of all new cancer diagnoses and 75% of all cancer deaths occur in seniors (age 65+). Transportation for medical services and care is one of the most serious mobility problems faced by seniors, particularly among those in rural settings. The WOH program is largely delivered by seniors for seniors, with seniors accounting for 75% of people accessing the service and 80% of the volunteer drivers.



Low SES populations

Low-income Canadians are 10 times more likely than other Canadians to report unmet health care needs due to transportation cost.⁵ Costs related to medical travel consume a larger share of disposable income than in high-income groups. These disparities are magnified for rural residents who, compared to their urban counterparts, earn lower incomes, are less likely to have private health insurance and have poorer health status and more chronic conditions. In 2019, 164 WOH clients (2.5%) registered had 3rd party billing status, meaning that they received income support, largely through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works. With an average of approximately 23 one-way trips per client, the Wheels of Hope program is a vital support to people living on low or fixed incomes in Ontario.

Wheels of Hope Re-launch

Our plan to relaunch the program is based on the following principles:

- All volunteer drivers will need to complete a re-training which incorporates new protocols and procedures for infection control and hygiene
- Volunteer drivers will be available in communities across Ontario to drive patients to appointments within 125-200 km of their homes (exact mileage to be determined prior to re-launch)
- Cancer patients residing outside this catchment will be eligible for a Financial Travel Subsidy program that provides yearly travel grants to those on low incomes
- Volunteer drivers will be compensated 20 cents/km driven as part of their volunteer role.

**The program will be re-assessed in the event of a drastic increase in COVID-19 cases throughout the province and in accordance with provincial and local public health directives. In the event that the volunteer driver program is suspended for patient and driver safety, funding will be provided directly to patients to offset transportation costs.*

Budget

CCS is seeking total government funding of \$2.5 M (\$1.7 M increase from current levels) to support the Wheels of Hope program. This investment will help clients across Ontario to reach their cancer treatment appointments. CCS will continue to look for program efficiencies and fund the remainder of the program to deliver on the re-launch principles described above.

Breakdown of requested government investment in Wheels of Hope

Expense Area	Cost
Staffing	\$869,000
Infrastructure	\$91,000
Mileage	\$1,500,000
Direct Travel to Treatment Funding	\$40,000
Total	\$2,500,000