



# NEWS RELEASE

## Medical wait times cost Canadian patients almost \$3.5 billion in lost wages last year

May 02, 2024  
For Immediate Release

**VANCOUVER**—Long waits for surgery and medical treatment cost Canadians almost \$3.5 billion in lost wages and productivity last year, finds a new study published today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

An estimated 1.2 million patients waited for medically necessary treatment last year, and each lost an estimated \$2,871 (on average) due to lost wages and reduced productivity during working hours.

“Waiting for medically necessary treatment remains a hallmark of the Canadian health-care system, and in addition to increased pain and suffering—and potentially worse medical outcomes—these long waits also cost Canadians time at work and with family and friends,” said Nadeem Esmail, a senior fellow with the Fraser Institute.

The study, *The Private Cost of Public Queues for Medically Necessary Care, 2024*, draws upon data from the Fraser Institute’s annual *Waiting Your Turn* survey of Canadian physicians who, in 2023, reported the national median waiting time from specialist appointment to treatment was 13.1 weeks.

Crucially, the \$3.5 billion in lost wages is likely a conservative estimate because it doesn’t account for the additional 14.6-week wait to see a specialist after receiving a referral from a general practitioner.

Taken together (14.6 and 13.1 weeks), the total median wait time in Canada for medical treatment was 27.7 weeks in 2023.

“As long as lengthy wait times define Canada’s health-care system, patients will continue to pay a price in lost wages and reduced quality of life,” said Mackenzie Moir, a senior policy analyst at the Fraser Institute and study co-author.

Because wait times and incomes vary by province, so does the cost of waiting for health care. Residents of Prince Edward Island in 2023 faced the highest per-patient cost of waiting (\$4,805), followed by New Brunswick (\$4,800) and Nova Scotia (\$4,683).

### Average value of time lost during the work week in 2023 for patients waiting for medically necessary treatment (by province):

British Columbia	\$2,963
Alberta	\$3,470
Saskatchewan	\$4,033
Manitoba	\$2,277
Ontario	\$1,660
Quebec	\$2,828
New Brunswick	\$4,800
Nova Scotia	\$4,683
Prince Edward Island	\$4,805
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$1,915

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