



# NEWS RELEASE

## Medical wait times cost Canadian patients almost \$3.6 billion in lost wages last year

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For Immediate Release

**VANCOUVER**—Long waits for surgery and medical treatment cost Canadians almost \$3.6 billion in lost wages and productivity last year, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

Preliminary data suggest that an estimated 1.2 million patients waited for medically necessary treatment last year, and each lost an estimated \$2,925 (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 Bacchus Barua, director of health policy studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *The Private Cost of Public Queues for Medically Necessary Care, 2023*.

The study draws upon data from the Fraser Institute’s annual *Waiting Your Turn* survey of Canadian physicians who, in 2022, reported the national median waiting time from specialist appointment to treatment was 14.8 weeks.

Crucially, the \$3.6 billion in lost wages is likely a conservative estimate because it doesn’t account for the additional 12.6-week wait to see a specialist after receiving a referral from a general practitioner.

Taken together (12.6 and 14.8 weeks), the total median wait time in Canada for medical treatment was 27.4 weeks in 2022—the longest in the survey’s history.

“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, Fraser Institute policy analyst and study co-author.

Because wait times and incomes vary by province, so does the cost of waiting for health care. Residents of Manitoba in 2022 faced the highest per-patient cost of waiting (\$4,463), followed by Nova Scotia (\$4,230) and New Brunswick (\$3,691).

**Average value of time lost during the work week in 2022 for patients waiting for medically necessary treatment (by province):**

British Columbia	\$2,363
Alberta	\$3,666
Saskatchewan	\$3,661
Manitoba	\$4,463
Ontario	\$1,916
Quebec	\$3,213
New Brunswick	\$3,691
Nova Scotia	\$4,230
Prince Edward Island	\$3,348
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$3,536

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