



NEWS RELEASE

Medical wait times cost Atlantic Canadian patients up to \$4,805—the highest in Canada—in lost wages in 2023

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For Immediate Release

HALIFAX—Long waits for surgery and medical treatment cost Atlantic Canadians the most nationwide—up to \$4,805 per patient—due to 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.

“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 Atlantic 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.

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.

Because wait times and incomes vary by province, so does the cost of waiting for health care—particularly in Atlantic Canada. In 2023, residents of Prince Edward Island in faced the highest per-patient cost of waiting nationwide at \$4,805, followed by New Brunswick (\$4,800) and Nova Scotia (\$4,683), all of which exceed the national average.

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 Atlantic Canada’s health-care system, patients will continue to pay a price in lost wages and reduced quality of life,” said Nadeem Esmail, Fraser Institute senior fellow.

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.

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

MEDIA CONTACT:

Nadeem Esmail, Senior Fellow
Fraser Institute

Alex Whalen, Associate Director, Atlantic Canada
Fraser Institute

To arrange media interviews or for more information, please contact:

Drue MacPherson, Fraser Institute
604-688-0221 ext. 721

drue.macpherson@fraserinstitute.org

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