



NEWS RELEASE

Waiting for treatment and surgery cost Canadians almost \$1.2 billion last year

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—Long waits for surgery and medical treatment cost Canadians a combined \$1.17 billion—or \$1,304 per patient—in 2015, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

The study, *The Private Cost of Public Queues for Medically Necessary Care*, calculates the average personal cost of time lost during the work week in Canada last year for each of the estimated 894,449 patients waiting for treatments, which include orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery and urology, for example.

“In addition to the physical and psychological pain and suffering Canadians endure while waiting for medically necessary treatment, they often lose valuable time, either in lost income from not working, lower productivity, or less time with friends and family,” said Bacchus Barua, study co- author and senior economist in the Fraser Institute's Centre for Health Policy Studies.

When calculations are extended to include hours outside the traditional work week—evenings and weekends—the estimated cost of waiting jumps from \$1.17 billion to \$3.53 billion, or about \$3,951 per patient.

The study draws upon data from the Fraser Institute's *Waiting Your Turn* study, an annual survey of Canadian physicians who, in 2015, reported an average median wait time from specialist appointment to treatment of 9.8 weeks—almost three weeks longer than what physicians consider clinically reasonable.

“Unless policymakers respond to Canada's long wait times with genuine reform, Canadian patients will continue to suffer undue loss of income and quality of life,” Barua said.

As wait times and incomes vary by province, so does the cost of waiting for health care. Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2015 faced the highest private cost of waiting per patient (\$2,517), followed by New Brunswick (\$2,029) and British Columbia (\$1,713).

Average value of time lost in 2015 for patient waiting for medically necessary care (by province):

- British Columbia: \$1,713
- Alberta: \$1,502
- Saskatchewan: \$768
- Manitoba: \$1,238
- Ontario: \$941
- Quebec: \$886
- New Brunswick: \$2,029
- Nova Scotia: \$1,462
- Prince Edward Island: \$1,379
- Newfoundland and Labrador: \$2,517

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