

November 11, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister, MP for Papineau
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6



Re: Urgent Support for Health Charities Coalition of Canada

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Health charities have been supporting people living with diseases in unprecedented ways throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, while struggling with the realities of revenue and job losses throughout the sector. We as a coalition are committed to meeting our overriding objective of supporting patients, caregivers and research efforts to find cures and improve treatments.

Right now, 1 in 3 Canadians suffer from a chronic disease and COVID-19 has impacted Canadian's access to care, including the cancellation of hundreds of thousands of surgeries, resulting in a fourfold increase in Canadians seeking our charities support services. We know that there is more support needed to help health charities continue to provide critical services for vulnerable patients throughout this pandemic, and as we emerge from it. **This is why we are calling on the Government of Canada to establish a \$131 million funding program over two years to support Canadian's living with diseases.**

Our primary concern is for people living with diseases and their families. Health charities supporting them are simultaneously being challenged with an increase in demand for direct support services, which has increased, and constrained budgets that have impacted existing patient support services and research initiatives. We must maintain investments in supports for people and caregivers living with disease, who require an increased level of engagement during a pandemic; and we must do this while also maintaining investments in health research to support not just those suffering from diseases today, but to protect the gains already made in health care research.

Our funding proposal includes \$103 million in funding to support research initiatives that are at risk and \$28 million to support patient support initiatives as a result of the pandemic. This funding will allow us to maintain our vital services, while also keeping up with the increasing demand due to COVID-19. Below are some examples of how our services in these two areas provide critical support for patients:

- **ALS Canada** supports approximately 1,000 people in Ontario living with ALS by providing community resources and essential equipment, such as hospital beds directly in the home. Their current revenues put these programs in jeopardy and is stressed due to COVID-19 and requirements to acquire sufficient PPE to ensure equipment is delivered safely. They also facilitate critical research in ALS care and treatments, but with a \$3,500,000 gap in revenues in 2020, new and innovative research is at risk of being held back.
- **Canadian Liver Foundation** delivers community-based patient programs, but due to COVID-19 they will have an estimated \$500,000 in unmet capacity needs as a result of their reductions in human resources. In addition, donors and patients expect the foundation to invest in critical liver-related research and education. However, because of the pandemic, they estimate that they will not be able to support over \$1 million in research funding in the coming year.

- **Parkinson Canada** provides critical programs and services for people affected by Parkinson's, including an Information and Referral Line, resources to live well with Parkinson's, and support groups. Parkinson Canada has a national research program that funds research into the cure, cause, improved treatments and understanding of Parkinson's disease and related disorders. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, Parkinson Canada is unable to fund two key research streams, Pilot Project Grants and New Investigator Awards, totalling \$600,000. Parkinson Canada needs more support to continue offering these critical programs, services, and research investments for people affected by Parkinson's.
- **Heart & Stroke** has been a source of credible, easy-to-understand information and guidance on how Canadians living with heart disease and stroke can stay safe, eat healthy, and access key health services throughout the pandemic. While their work has never been more needed or in demand, the decline in charitable revenues currently being experienced as a result of the pandemic has resulted in a 35% cut to their annual lifesaving research investments (approximately \$11 million). Federal assistance is needed in order to avoid long-term losses in the progress they have made in Canada over the last six decades.

Members of the Health Charities Coalition of Canada have seen significant revenue reductions compared to this time last year. Without immediate support, these setbacks will have lasting impacts on health research in Canada, affecting hundreds of researchers, undermining millions of dollars in investments already made, and contributing to poorer health outcomes for Canadians.

Health charities have unequivocally focused on Canadians living with diseases and providing the support they need, regardless of the lack of funding and operating personnel. In order for people living with diseases to continue to receive the necessary support they need right now, there is no question, health charities and the people we support need the support of the Government of Canada.

Regards,



Connie Côté
CEO, Health Charities Coalition of Canada

CC:

The Honourable Patricia Hajdu, Minister of Health
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance
The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children & Social Development
The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science & Industry

About Health Charities Coalition of Canada

Founded in 2000, the Health Charities Coalition of Canada (HCCC) is a member-based organization comprised of national health charities and patient groups who represent the voice of patients at all levels of the health continuum. Our mission is to strengthen the voice of Canadians, patients and caregivers by promoting enhanced health policy and increased investment in health research. For more information visit healthcharities.ca.