



June 6, 2025

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office, Room 281
Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Sent via email: premier@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford:

Re: Pilot Program for Accelerated Access to 'High Priority' Cancer Drugs in Ontario

The **Colorectal Cancer Resource & Action Network**, (herein 'CCRAN'), and **Save Your Skin Foundation**, in collaboration with the undersigned 14 patient representative groups, graciously and respectfully welcome Ontario's announcement of a [pilot program](#) to accelerate access to high priority cancer drugs in Ontario as a first step towards addressing this longstanding issue.

Cancer remains the **leading cause of death** in Ontario, and across Canada. It is a disease that truly impacts the entire healthcare ecosystem – we have all been touched directly or indirectly by this devastating pathology that fundamentally alters lives. Our Canadian patients wait approximately two years after Health Canada approval to gain public access to newly approved medicines; and in Ontario, this delay is inclusive of an average of over five months to make drugs available to patients on its public formulary.¹ Patients simply cannot afford these delays.

Timeliness of access to cancer drugs, and, in particular, to precision medicines, can improve patient outcomes, enabling longer lives and improving the quality of life, while at the same time, decreasing the burden on healthcare resources. As such, we welcome steps that speed up provincial listings of lifesaving and life-prolonging medications.

As you know, the medical management of advanced and metastatic cancers is evolving at an unprecedented pace, with innovative, lifesaving and life-extending drugs emerging across cancer types at a rapid rate. Amongst the G7 nations, Canada is in the unenviable position of having an excessively long 'time-to-patient', which is the amount of time it takes for new and innovative therapies to become accessible (publicly funded) to those who need them after regulatory approval. This is time that too many patients simply do not have. There is a significant unmet clinical need for rapid access to emerging cancer therapies. Dr. Michael Raphael emphasizes his support and the crucial need for timely access to treatments:

"An Accelerated Access Program represents a critical step forward to ensuring cancer patients receive promising new treatments when they need them most – not after avoidable delays that can cost lives and hope."

Dr. Michael Raphael MD FRCPC
GI Medical Oncologist, Odette Cancer Centre, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
Assistant Professor, Division of Medical Oncology, University of Toronto
Medical Oncology Lead, Hepatic Arterial Infusion Pump Program

With thanks, in large part, to your efforts to champion this pilot program, Ontario will emerge as a leader, helping to bring high-priority cancer drugs to patients who so desperately require them, in an expedited fashion. Accelerated access to oncology therapeutics will undeniably bring a sense of confidence and hope to cancer patients and their loved

ones as they deal with one of the most difficult diagnosis imaginable. A young endometrial cancer patient shares her perspective on the profound impact that this program will have on patients:

“Having rapid access to these medications is not just reducing financial toxicities but directly saving lives and families. It’s about a community not giving up on those in need. Cancer can be very aggressive and it’s a race against time.”

**Dianna (Toronto, Ontario)
Metastatic Endometrial Cancer Patient**

Access to emerging therapeutics is life-changing, and in some cases, life-saving, often allowing patients to once again become engaged in life in a meaningful way – as contributing members of society, their families, and their communities. It is our sincere hope that this pilot program proves successful in reducing the time it takes for treatments to be publicly funded and will be adopted as a **permanent program**. Thoughtful consideration must also be given to expanding access beyond *select* high priority drugs because everyone impacted by cancer will require a vast array of medicines to optimally treat their respective disease.

It is imperative that cancer patients in Ontario don’t get left behind. Ensuring timely, evidence-based access to new cancer medicines for both adult and pediatric patients is essential to improving outcomes and advancing equity in cancer care. Children and adolescents with cancer often face limited treatment options and different drug-access challenges. It is important that the structure of the accelerated access scheme does not preclude consideration of evidence-based uses for children, adolescents, and young adults with cancer – particularly if evidence becomes available later in a medicine’s life-cycle.

We trust that all levels of the Canadian government, including health ministers and drug plan managers across the provincial and territorial jurisdictions, will work collaboratively to help achieve this vision of expeditiously implementing an accelerated access program consistent with the mandate of Project Orbis. Ontario patients, and patients across our great nation, are deserving of nothing less.

We, the undersigned, thank you for taking strides towards ensuring timely access to new and innovative cancer drugs by cutting through the red tape plaguing our health systems which result in unnecessary delays in timely access, unnecessary deaths and suffering, and inefficient healthcare expenditures. Your actions will help to improve patients’ quality of life and extend survival – outcomes that should be rightly afforded to all cancer patients in Canada.

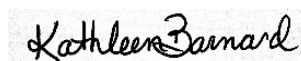
We respectfully recommend that **all** stakeholders work in a unified and cohesive manner to help bring this program to fruition and reduce the time it takes for patients to access new medications. Patients and patient representatives offer their unequivocal support and assistance to achieve a successful pilot project and its potential adoption as a permanent program. Together, we can surely achieve far more than we would otherwise working in siloes. We welcome the opportunity to be engaged in expediting the implementation of this pilot project in any way we can be of assistance to you, in service to patients.

Please reach out to us and advise us how we can be of assistance. You can reach us via email at filomena.s@ccran.org, kathy@saveyourskin.ca or via phone at **1 833 79 CCRAN (22726) x1000, 1 604 842 5658** at any time. We would be delighted to hear from you. On behalf of cancer patients in Ontario, please accept our gratitude for your thoughtful attention to this matter and your dedication to improving patient outcomes in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Filomena Servidio-Italiano
President & CEO
CCRAN



Kathleen Barnard
Founder and President
Save Your Skin Foundation



Shem Singh
Executive Director
Lung Cancer Canada



Antonella Rizza
CEO
Lymphoma Canada



Christina Halladay
VP, Mission & Innovation
Pancreatic Cancer Canada

**PANCREATIC
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Brenda Clayton
Founder
Cholangio-Hepatocellular Carcinoma Canada



Jackie Manthorne
President & CEO
Canadian Cancer Survivor Network



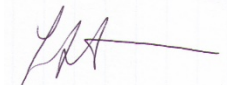
Nicole Farrell
Interim CEO
Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada



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Leah Stephenson
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GIST Sarcoma Life Raft Group Canada
Groupe Sauvetage GIST Sarcome Canada
Ensuring that no one has to face GIST alone

Lucy You
Vice President,
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Teresa Tiano
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Foundation of Canada





Michelle Burleigh
Founder, Immunocompromised People Are Not
Expendable (IPANE)
Co-Chair, Canadian Immunocompromised Advocacy
Network (CIAN)



IPANE
Immunocompromised
People Are Not Expendable



Teresa Norris
Founder and President
HPV Global Action



1. Conference Board of Canada (2024). Access and Time to Patient: Prescription Drugs in Canada