

Dear Minister Dix,

We are writing to you today on behalf of two in five Canadians who will likely receive a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. These patients are relying on you to ensure British Columbia's health system is ready to adopt science and innovation where it is today – and where it's headed in the future.

We wanted to bring to your attention the [“Towards the routine use of genome-based testing in Canada's largest regions: A State of Readiness Progress Report”](#) led by Don Husereau at the School of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Ottawa. The report provides a better understanding of Canada's state of readiness for genomic medicine, specifically examining readiness among the country's largest jurisdictions, and outlines its potential to improve health system efficiency, the health and healthcare journey of patients and care provider experiences.

A future-proof care system provides timely and equitable care based on precise information about the nature of underlying disease, health conditions, what outcomes can be expected, and how likely or whether a patient may respond to any given therapy or treatment. The technology is already here and countries around the globe are accelerating progress in delivering world class and sustainable genome-based testing to make their health systems more resilient.

The Australian Genomics Health Alliance, a collaborative research partnership across more than 80 diagnostic laboratories, clinical genetics services, and research and academic institutions, is Australia's attempt to accelerate and evaluate the application of genome-based testing in healthcare. The United States is conducting a study forecasting a future shortfall of genetic counsellors and medical geneticists, developing an evaluative framework for genetic testing. In the UK, the Genomics Education Programme (GEP) plans to develop genomic competencies for specialty training and investing billions of dollars in digital technology, systems and infrastructure.

Countries around the world are recognizing the value of genome-based testing, particularly in improving the experience and outcomes of patients who can potentially access timely and innovative diagnosis, care and treatment, and improving the care provider experience with reduced need for surgeries, specialist referrals and follow-up visits. Additionally, these countries are also unlocking and tapping into the potential of genome-based testing to create millions of dollars in health system savings by avoiding unnecessary tests and procedures and improving population health outcomes.

Patients want faster access to better diagnostics, which requires faster access to new technologies. British Columbia can't fall behind. While British Columbia has made some progress, including recognizing the potential of genome-based testing in the province's 10-year cancer action plan, it is far from ready. There are still significant gaps that need to be addressed or we risk having patients living with cancer and rare diseases unable to realize the full potential improved outcomes being brought forward from scientific developments and innovation in genome-based testing.

Tangible policy actions British Columbia can take to ensure infrastructure readiness to expand access to genome-based testing, include:

1. Accelerate projects already underway to create federated data commons ensuring seamless integration of laboratory information across centres.



2. Improve transparency around and navigation for access to genome-based testing by working with care providers and health care navigators to publish test lists and protocols.
3. Develop province wide education and training standards to ensure consistency in the quality of testing service.

British Columbia is taking concrete steps to advance its system readiness for genomic medicine including, the role of the Provincial Laboratory Medicine Services (PLMS) in creating a community of practice to facilitate service coordination.

Read the full report and see how jurisdictions across Canada are faring in their readiness for genome-based testing by visiting: accesstogenomictesting.ca

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how concerted action led by your Ministry on these policy recommendations will move British Columbia further along this path, ensuring patients, care providers and the health system at-large can benefit from this new era of genomic medicine.

Sincerely,

Lung Cancer Canada
Colorectal Cancer Canada
Canadian Cancer Survivor Network
Lung Health Foundation
Canadian Breast Cancer Network
Unmasking the Reality of Lung Cancer