

Dear Minister Thompson,

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 Nova Scotia'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. Nova Scotia can't fall behind. While Nova Scotia has made some progress, 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 Nova Scotia can take to ensure infrastructure readiness to expand access to genome-based testing, include:

1. Establish a single point of entry for onboarding new tests moving away from the current process of it being restricted to the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) through an undefined process of priority setting.



2. Establish a funding formula to invest in test development, moving away from the current patchwork approach of the Ministry releasing funding on a case-by-case basis.
3. Develop province wide education and training standards to ensure consistency in the quality of testing service.

Nova Scotia can lead Canada further along the path of readiness in genomic-based testing infrastructure. All that is needed is concerted action from your Ministry on these policy recommendations to ensure Nova Scotians can benefit from this new era of genomic medicine.

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 in the coming weeks to further discuss these policy actions.

Sincerely,

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