

Federal Budget: Promising start, but more needs to be done

March 20th, 2019

Ottawa, ON- The Canadian Lung Association applauds the government's focus on access to medication in the federal budget released on March 19. The introduction of the Canadian Drug Agency prioritizes access to medicine, which is a critical item that affects Canadians with lung disease. While the measures associated with the creation of the Canadian Drug Agency are welcome, more needs to be done to address the overall lung health of Canadians, including tobacco strategy cost recovery fee to ensure we continue to fund measures to eliminate tobacco in Canada and greater focus on air pollution.

"We are happy to see that the health of Canadians is figuring prominently in this year's budget" says Terry Dean, president and CEO, The Canadian Lung Association - National.

"The introduction of the Canadian Drug Agency is a much-needed step towards making healthcare affordable and accessible to all Canadians. We strongly believe that all Canadians should have access to medication regardless of where they live or how much money they make."

The federal support for the establishment of the Canadian Drug Agency, which would oversee the development of a new national formulary of prescribed drugs and provide additional support for Canadians with rare diseases, is much needed. The Canadian Lung Association will welcome the opportunity to work with the federal government on these developments to ensure patients' perspective continue to guide the work.

While prioritizing access to medication is welcome and necessary, The Canadian Lung Association would also like to see stronger action as it relates to air pollution and tobacco control.

While the Canadian Lung Association supports the proposed incentives that would make zero-emission vehicles more affordable, there seems to be a lack of funding dedicated specifically to helping Canadians with the health effects of climate change, as related to air quality.

Tobacco continues to be the number one preventable cause of disease and death in Canada and as such, greater investment and focus is needed. The Association was pleased with reference to the continued support for tobacco control that was announced in the 2018 Federal Budget; however, the tobacco strategy cost recovery fee is missing. More action is needed to get to the federal government's objective of a prevalence of tobacco use of less than 5% by 2035.

Lastly, while the Association is happy to see items such as palliative care received attention, there is some disappointment that funding towards the Canadian Palliative Care Implementation Collaborative (Palliative Care Framework) was not included in this year's budget.

"We look forward to continuing to work with the federal government to elevate the voices of Canadians affected by lung disease."

As federal election approaches in the fall, The Canadian Lung Association looks forward to getting greater commitments from all political parties to climate change, national pharmacare and eliminating tobacco.