



The Canadian
Continenence Foundation



Incontinence Coalition Consensus Statement

To: Federal and Provincial Ministers of Health

From: The undersigned organizations, representing people living with bladder control problems (urinary incontinence)

The undersigned organizations, respectfully request that Ministers of Health and other decision makers recognize the prevalent and chronic condition of incontinence.

Incontinence affects more than 3 million Canadian men and women and is a chronic condition that carries an enormous stigma. Incontinence can impact all parts of a person's life: their social interactions, their sex life, their ability to work, travel, play sports, and participate in community life. It can be an emotionally devastating condition that causes social isolation, low self-esteem, depression, and a fear of intimacy.

There is an urgent need for:

- **Public acknowledgement** The Government must publicly acknowledge the prevalence of the condition and the need for treatment. Canadians living with incontinence usually endure the condition in silence because of the stigma attached. Many are too embarrassed to seek treatment. A public acknowledgement will help normalize and de-stigmatize the condition.
- **Public Education and Awareness** The government must take a pro-active role in promoting awareness and education of this condition to the public. This includes:
 - Conducting an extensive awareness campaign;
 - Providing information on government web sites which will include links to other groups and resources;
 - Providing funding to organizations and associations that are able to provide support for individuals with incontinence.
- **Better access to treatment and care** People living with incontinence must have better access to treatment. This includes better access to:
 - Absorbent products funding in Long Term Care Facilities: Increased funding for absorbent products in long term care facilities is necessary. Daily funding allotments for incontinence supplies in long term care facilities is so low that people with incontinence cannot be changed as often as necessary. As a consequence, some individuals with incontinence must remain in soiled diapers for long periods of time.
 - Absorbent products for community dwelling individuals: The government must assist community dwelling users of absorbent incontinence products so that they have the financial resources to select the products that best suit their needs. Individuals living on fixed incomes often cannot afford the \$1,500-\$2,500 per year to buy incontinence products.
 - Surgical treatments: Wait times for appropriate surgical treatments must be reduced. Furthermore, individuals with incontinence must have access to timely and appropriate surgical treatments, regardless of their geographic location. There are currently wait lists of up to two years for needed surgical treatments



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for stress urinary incontinence, and disparities in access depending upon where the individual lives.

- **Medications:** All approved incontinence medications must be included on provincial formularies.
 - **Catheters:** Canadians must have access to funding for catheters and related supplies. Adequate funding support for these materials varies widely and is unacceptably low. An increase in funding for supplies is necessary in most provinces.
- **Increased emphasis on incontinence education for general practitioners** Many people living with incontinence do not seek treatment as they are too embarrassed to do so. GPs must become more knowledgeable and proactively bring up the subject with their older patients. GPs can be aided by:
 - More hours devoted to the subject in medical schools and
 - Increasing numbers of Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses devoted to incontinence issues.
 - Promoting awareness of and adherence to Clinical Practice Guidelines
 - **Continenence Care Clinics** The government must provide funding for Continenence Care Clinics. These clinics will provide assessment, management, education and referral for people living with incontinence.
 - **Trained nurses and other supportive care-givers** Nurses and nurse practitioners who are trained in continence care are needed to help provide support for those individuals living with incontinence.

Coalition Members

Canadian Continenence Foundation

Canadian Obesity Network

Canadian Paraplegic Association

Canadian Prostate Cancer Network

CARP, A New Vision for Aging in Canada

Easter Seals Canada

Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario