

Value of Radiology Part II Advocacy Toolkit

The **Conference Board of Canada** recently published a report (June 25, 2019) demonstrating that a greater investment in medical imaging equipment will improve quality care for patients, while helping government enhance value. As you are aware the Canadian Association of Radiologists commissioned this report to help raise awareness for value of radiology in Canada and to help support our advocacy efforts. It is our hope that this report will garner support from key political leaders for change. We have put many initiatives in place to help spread the word and communicate the results of this report, but we need your help. As radiologists you are the ideal spokesperson for your profession and can describe firsthand the impact that insufficient medical imaging equipment is having on the healthcare system.



*"In July 2017, the government announced their proposed changes to tax benefits that were accessible to small business corporations. After encouragement from the CAR, I contacted my MP to request a meeting. Political advocacy is not something that I had ever done before. My provincial representative was very receptive and engaged. I walked out of her office feeling incredibly empowered. I'd spoken up and I'd been heard. I truly believe it was the combination of my voice, along with thousands of other across the country, which slowly turned the tide on these tax changes and eventually lessened their impact when the final legislation was approved. Following this experience, I will not hesitate to meet with my Mayor, MP or other political leaders who are able to, at the very least, listen to my concerns. **We are in an era of change and with competing political platforms and agendas, particularly in this election year, I encourage everyone to consider stepping forward in your community to advocate for what you value.**" – Dr. Amie Padilla-Thornton, Mount St. Joseph Hospital with MP Goldsmith Jones, West Vancouver*

Below we have put together some speaking points, sample questions and tips for reaching out to your local Member of Parliament. We encourage you to connect with you MP and help to share the results of this report.

Current Impact with Status Quo

- In 2017 Canadian imaging equipment is undersupplied – investment in medical imaging is at a 20-year low
- Excessive wait times impact millions of Canadians.
- Patients suffer financially because of wait times.
- CT and MRI services are needed by millions of Canadians, however, are constrained by health system limits.
- Thousands of Canadians (380,000) are forced temporarily out of work while waiting for treatment.

At current growth trends in the number of CT and MRI machines, imaging equipment will be significantly undersupplied to address increased demand for medical imaging diagnostics. By 2040, CT and MRI machines will be undersupplied by 13% and 24%, respectively, relative to patient demand.

Many patients require medical imaging diagnostics at the outset of their experience. Receiving diagnoses earlier reduces total wait times and can improve health outcomes.

Patients waiting longer than recommended, who are forced to stop working, contribute less to their regional economies and are forced to abide to health system constraints for an average of 50-82 days for CT and up to 89 days for MRI; waiting 20-52 days longer than recommended.

Key Findings

- Excessive wait times for CT and MRI diagnostics cost the economy \$3.54 billion in 2017.
- Approximately 5 per cent of patients, or 380,000 people a year (1 in 20), are forced to exit the workforce temporarily while they wait longer than the recommended maximum wait time.
- Having workers off the job while waiting for diagnostics hurts the ability of firms to produce goods and services. This, in turn, reduces GDP, reducing government revenues by \$430 million a year.
- The cost of excessive wait times will likely increase. Growth in demand for CT and MRI services is expected to outpace the growth in supply over the long term.
- Currently, 151 new CT machines and 91 new MRI machines are required to modernize Canada's stock of medical imaging equipment, at a cost of \$469 million.
- Total investment in acquiring imaging machinery needed to meet demand and in keeping the machines up to date with the latest technology amounts to \$4.4 billion over the next two decades.

#1 Priority

The CAR is asking the Federal government to support the following recommendation:

\$1.1 billion over the next five years, as part of the federal transfer to the provinces, to ensure that available imaging equipment meets the quality standards that patients deserve inclusive of our seniors and indigenous communities

Canadians Support a Federal Investment in Radiology

A public opinion poll conducted by *Nanos Research (July 2018)* demonstrates Canadians support a greater investment in radiology. The results revealed:

- **3 out of 4 Canadians (73%)** have received a health care treatment that included a radiologist or have a family member who has received a healthcare treatment that included a radiologist.
- **over two in three Canadians** believe that Canada should spend tax dollars to have more current medical imaging equipment.
- **83% of Canadians** would support research in the use of AI in radiology in Canada. A modest investment from the government in this type of research would improve patient outcomes and make medical imaging more accessible.

About the Canadian Association of Radiologists and the Practice of Radiology

The Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR) is the national voice for radiologists in Canada, dedicated to imaging excellence and advocating for the highest standard of patient care across the country. Representing over 2,400 members who provide vital medical imaging for millions of patients across the country, the CAR is recognized leader in education, research and innovation in radiology. Our members are dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of care and patient safety in Canada.

Potential Questions from Your Member of Parliament

1. Why are diagnostic imaging equipment investments needed now?

Canadian imaging equipment is undersupplied. Moreover, Canada appears below approximately half of the countries with data collected by the OECD in terms of number of CT and MRI units per million people. This figure is exacerbated by unequal distribution of units across the country, and by ageing units that are no longer as safe and effective. We are currently at a 20-year low for investment in imaging equipment. The average Canadian waits between 50-82 days for CT and up to 89 days for MRI/ This is 20-52 days longer than recommended by Canadian Wait time Alliance and supported by the CAR. This is only going to get worse with the growing aging population and more patients who will require imaging procedures. ***Give a personal example in your practice***

2. Are doctors driving up the demand for diagnostic imaging? Why is it rising so fast?

The demand is rising. The population is aging as well as increasing and the need for medical imaging procedures is rising with it. Also, investment in medical imaging equipment is at a 20-year low, which is impacting the inventory of viable equipment. ¹ According to the report published by CADTH in 2017, it has been estimated that between 27% of medical imaging equipment is more than 10 years old. This is significantly below the Golden Rule referenced by the Conference Board, which recommends that 60% of medical imaging equipment should be less than 5 years old.

The Golden Rule developed by COCIR (European Coordination Committee of the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT Industry) in 2003 is used as a guide for optimal medical equipment distribution around the world to guide optimal diagnostic imaging investment. The CAR recognizes appropriateness of testing as a factor in impacting the number of and is working with physician organizations (CFPC, CAEP) to ensure frontline physicians have better access to guidelines for referrals so that they can ensure patients have the proper testing and are informed.

3. Isn't this a provincial jurisdiction?

Healthcare is a provincial jurisdiction: however, medical imaging is a national problem that needs to be addressed. There are inequalities across Canada in terms of resources and capital. This should be an opportunity for the federal government to take a leadership role and make this a priority This would ensure that all Canadians have equal access to these lifesaving procedures.

There is also a precedent: in 2004 the federal government set-up a diagnostic imaging equipment investment fund to ensure sufficient distribution of medical imaging equipment across the country so that patients could have improved access to necessary medical imaging testing.

4. How do you know when wait times are excessive?

The Conference Board did an analysis of the international standards for inventory of medical imaging equipment and cross referenced it with wait times. Waiting 89 days for an MRI is excessive. The Wait Time Alliance, supported by the CAR National Maximum Wait Times Access Targets for Medical Imaging report recommends no more than 30 days for priority 3 emergent conditions, 7 days for priority 2 urgent cases and 24 hours for priority 1 emergent cases. The long-term impacts of waiting on Canadians can be detrimental. With earlier testing we can diagnose disease and provide treatment sooner resulting in improved patient outcomes. Also, many people waiting for testing are off work. This not only affects their quality of life but also negatively impacts the economy. In 2017 excessive wait times for CT and MRI diagnostics cost the economy \$3.54 billion, according to the Conference Board model.

Sources:

Canadian Wait Time Alliance:

<http://www.waittimealliance.ca/benchmarks/radiology/>

CADTH Medical Imaging Inventory 2017

<https://cadth.ca/canadian-medical-imaging-inventory-2017>

Conference Board of Canada – Value of Radiology, Part II

https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/b972ab5b-57c1-4352-8c4d-0dad9d99f3db/10328_The%20Value%20of%20Radiology_RPT.pdf

OECD Data for MRI and CT

<https://data.oecd.org/healtheqt/magnetic-resonance-imaging-mri-units.htm>

Contacting Your MP:

Use the following website to search your local representative:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

Meeting Request:

1. send a meeting request via email and clearly state your intentions. Be sure to identify that you are a constituent in their riding and would like to discuss issues related to healthcare
 2. A meeting typically is easier to schedule during the summer months in the MP's riding but expect to wait a few weeks
 3. Bring copies of the report to share with MP and their political staff
 4. Select 3 key points from above and focus on those and give personal examples from your practice/experience during the discussion
 5. Be sure to ask for a picture and share it on social media and with the CAR
 6. When you wrap up the discussion tell the MP what you would like from them and ask what you can do for them
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SAMPLE AGENDA

A typical meeting is 20-25 minutes. Be sure to begin the meeting by asking how much time your MP has.

1. Introduction - who you are and where you work (2 mins)
2. Brief overview of the CAR (2 mins)
3. Overview of priorities – investment in a national medical imaging equipment fund and how this would benefit Canadians and patients in your community – (5 mins)
4. Questions? (5 mins)
5. Ask - What can I do for you? (2 mins)
6. Request a photo for social media (2 mins)
7. Wrap-up by summarizing the discussion, action items and commit to follow-up (2 mins)

Contact Natalie St-Pierre at nst-pierre@car.ca if you require additional support