



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 21, 2025

Canadians Dying by the Thousands While Waiting for “Free” Healthcare

At least 15,000 Canadians died in a single year while waiting for their “free” government healthcare, some of them having been on the waiting list for more than 14 years, according to a new [report](#) from Saskatchewan-based think tank SecondStreet.org.

In a January 15 [press release](#), SecondStreet.org legislative and policy director Harrison Fleming said:

Canadians pay really high taxes and yet our health care system is failing when compared to better-performing universal systems in Europe.

Thousands of Canadians across the country find themselves on waitlists — in some cases for several years — with too many tragically dying before ever getting treated, or even diagnosed.



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Wait Loss

SecondStreet.org filed Freedom of Information requests with various provincial healthcare bodies, seeking data on patients who had died while awaiting treatment between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024.

From the responses it received, the group was able to determine that “at least 15,474 patients died in Canada while waiting for surgeries or diagnostic scans.”

However, that count is based on data from “only 12 health bodies in seven provinces (representing 62% of the population),” and some of those only provided data indicating patients who died while awaiting surgery but not those who died while awaiting diagnostic scans. Extrapolating from the available data, SecondStreet.org estimated that 28,077 patients died in the government’s healthcare queue.

In Ontario, 378 patients died while awaiting cardiac procedures. Another patient died in 2023 after a 14-year wait for orthopedic surgery. Still another was told in 2010 that he needed a CT scan, the recommended waiting time for which was 10 days; the patient died 13.5 years later, still waiting for his scan. According to the report, “There are hundreds of other instances just in Ontario alone where patients were waiting for more than 18 months for care before passing away untreated or undiagnosed.”

According to [Statistics Canada](#), 326,571 Canadians died in 2023. Thus, the estimated 28,077 who passed while the socialist healthcare system dithered represent roughly 8.5 percent of all deaths.



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Moreover, observed the [Euthanasia Prevention Coalition](#), “When the number of Canadians who die while on a waiting list for treatment is combined with the number of euthanasia deaths, the number of deaths is overwhelming.”

Canada’s [Ministry of Health](#) reported that, in 2023, 15,343 Canadians chose death by assisted suicide. But, noted the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, “Some euthanasia deaths are connected to Canadians who ‘choose’ to die by euthanasia because they have waited in a queue for treatment and give up.” The group highlighted the case of a [52-year-old British Columbian](#) who decided to be euthanized in 2023 after spending 10 weeks in the hospital awaiting cancer treatment.

Doctored Statistics

SecondStreet.org has been compiling statistics on healthcare waiting list deaths since 2018. During that time, the group says, it “has identified a staggering 74,677 cases where Canadians died while waiting for care.”

To be fair, not all of those patients died because they had not yet received lifesaving care. Some were merely waiting for treatments such as hip replacements or cataract surgeries. While not absolutely imperative, such treatments would have improved their quality of life in their final days and perhaps lengthened their lives by allowing them to remain mobile.

It many cases, though, it is impossible to determine whether a healthcare delay directly caused a patient’s death because authorities simply don’t keep track of such things. Some officials explicitly told SecondStreet.org that they didn’t deliberately track such data. “It is SecondStreet.org’s understanding that governments happen to track this data by chance through waiting list system software, rather than purposely tracking the problem to identify areas that require improvement,” reads the report.

Said SecondStreet.org president Colin Craig:

When a restaurant fails a health inspection, the government shares the news publicly and sometimes notices are posted in the establishment’s windows for everyone to see. But, when nearly 75,000 Canadians have died before getting the care they needed, governments don’t proactively disclose anything. Maybe it’s time for governments to hold themselves to the same standard they hold everyone else.

Indeed, the report points out, given government mandates on businesses, “one could reasonably expect a provincial government to carefully track and disclose how many patients die each year due to the state taking too long to provide treatment.” But, whether because of typical bureaucratic inefficiency or out of a desire not to reveal their failures, Canadian healthcare bodies do not.

The report also notes that its figures for 2023-24 may be undercounts because SecondStreet.org “learned of several cases where a government health body does not learn that a patient has died until administrators call to schedule a surgery or diagnostic appointment.”

The Capitalism Cure

Defenders of socialized healthcare will, of course, claim that these problems could be solved with more funding. Anticipating this, SecondStreet.org wrote, “Health spending in Canada remains at historically high levels,” rising “at more than double the rate of inflation over the past three decades.” In fact,



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“Canada is ‘among the highest spenders’ in the world on health care. It is clear money alone cannot solve this health care crisis.”

SecondStreet.org recommends several reforms that would surely ameliorate the problems better than throwing dollars at them would, such as partnering with non-government clinics and allowing patients to purchase healthcare at private clinics. The only reform that will solve the Canadian healthcare system’s problems permanently, however, is separating healthcare and state — a prescription that would cure America’s healthcare ills, too.



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