

### **CPFF Recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Finance for the 2025 Provincial Budget**

CPFF is a registered Canadian charity originally established as a private foundation in 2009 to provide answers, hope and support for people affected by pulmonary fibrosis (PF). It educates and raises awareness about PF; raises funds to invest in research; and represents Canadians affected by PF to governments, healthcare professionals, the media and the public.

PF is a disease in which the lungs become scarred, making breathing progressively more difficult. There is no cure, and the prognosis is worse than many types of cancer. Approximately 12,000 Ontarians live with PF.

CPFF's founder, Robert Davison believed that "breathing should never be hard work"©. Yet for Ontarians living with PF, shortness of breath is a daily challenge. In fact, many describe the feeling like trying to breathe through a drinking straw, while others mention being 'tethered' to their supplemental oxygen source.

Simply put, breathing can be extremely difficult for people with PF. As there is no cure for the disease, for many, the use of *supplemental oxygen* is often a life saver, allowing for less breathlessness and fatigue and for a more active lifestyle and in some cases, continuing working.

As CPFF has been saying for years, the number of people living with PF is expected to only increase. Canadians with Scleroderma, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, and other connective tissue diseases may also develop PF. Recent studies have also shown the long-term affects on people who survived COVID-19 include pulmonary fibrosis. Some of the findings are:

- One of the most serious long-term consequences in COVID-19 patients is pulmonary fibrosis. ([Post-COVID-19 Pulmonary Fibrosis: Facts-Challenges and Futures: A Narrative Review](#))
- Post-COVID-19 pulmonary fibrosis is one of the major concerns arising after the recovery from this pandemic. ([Post-COVID-19 pulmonary fibrosis: An ongoing concern; Nuha Nasser Alrajhi](#))
- Post-COVID-19 ILD is an emerging consequence of the pandemic. The risk of post-COVID-19 pulmonary fibrosis is highest among acute severe COVID-19 ([Post-COVID-19 pulmonary fibrosis: An ongoing concern](#))

**Recommendation 1 – Remove all unnecessary barriers to qualifying for and accessing oxygen therapy, including removing the policy that does not allow for full coverage of oxygen therapy for people under the age of 65.**

Qualifying for oxygen therapy is much more complicated than it needs to be.

Medical criteria to qualify for oxygen therapy are rigid or unsuitable, and rely on testing protocols based on the needs of those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, a different disease altogether and a disease that requires less supplemental oxygen than for those with PF.

Further, a healthy oxygen level is 95 per cent or higher. Oxygen therapy can be helpful when oxygen levels drop below 88 per cent. But, in some provinces, including right here in Ontario, that level must drop below 80 per cent for patients to be eligible for supplemental oxygen.

Finally, the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) provides financial assistance for home oxygen therapy to residents who meet specific medical criteria. For individuals under 65 however, the ADP covers only 75% of the cost of home oxygen therapy, including equipment, supplies, delivery, setup, and maintenance. The remaining 25% is the responsibility of the patient. People living with PF who require oxygen to breathe and to live a full life will always need oxygen.

*CPFF's recommendation is for the Government of Ontario to start removing the barriers to qualifying for and accessing oxygen therapy, starting with the unfair age restriction on people under the age of 65.*

#### *The benefit to Ontario*

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) estimates the cost of a standard hospital stay in Canada is \$7,800 (in 2021-2022). Individuals with pulmonary fibrosis (PF) or other conditions requiring supplemental oxygen who are unable to access it due to various barriers often end up in the hospital, resulting in significant costs to taxpayers and Ontario's healthcare system—funds that could instead support the provision of at-home oxygen and necessary equipment. Providing and fully funding oxygen therapy not only reduces healthcare costs but also enhances the quality of life for those in need, enabling them to continue working or enjoying daily activities.

CPFF's recommendation that oxygen therapy be full covered for all individuals regardless of age was developed in consultation with Ontarians living with PF, their caregivers, their healthcare providers and oxygen suppliers. This recommendation is a simple, practical and affordable measure that can and should be taken if patient-centred care is the objective of Ontario's healthcare system.

CPFF would be pleased to answer any questions or provide more information. Please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Puneet Luthra, Manager of Government Relations, at [gr@cpff.ca](mailto:gr@cpff.ca) or 416-953-5791.

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