



# **How Diabetes 360° supports Canada's recovery from COVID-19**

**Submission to the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the 2021  
Federal Budget**

**By Diabetes Canada  
July 2020**

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Charitable Number: 11883 0744 RR0001

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**Recommendation:** The federal government should invest \$150 million in funding over seven years (beginning with an initial budget of \$6 million in 2021) to support the implementation of a new nation-wide diabetes strategy based on the Diabetes 360° framework and should facilitate the creation of Indigenous-specific strategic approaches led and owned by Indigenous groups, to support recovery from COVID-19 and to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian discovery of insulin in 2021.



## **How Diabetes 360° supports Canada's recovery from COVID-19**

Given the huge burden of diabetes in Canada and the consequent need to align and coordinate provincial and territorial approaches to its prevention and management, support for Diabetes Canada's Diabetes 360° nation-wide strategy has been strong and growing in recent years. The global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of Canadians with diabetes and the need for solutions that are core parts of the Diabetes 360° approach, such as enhanced virtual care and health care systems and data integration. Diabetes 360° therefore is an enabler of Canada's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and should be implemented in honour of the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada in 2021.

### **100 years of Canadian pride**

In 2021, the world will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of insulin, which has saved the lives of millions of people around the world. Insulin was discovered by a team of doctors at the University of Toronto, and its discovery made Canada a global leader in the treatment of what was otherwise a terminal disease – type 1 diabetes.

This anniversary is a source of Canadian pride – an Angus Reid poll in June 2020 found that 90 per cent of Canadians say knowing that insulin was discovered in Canada adds to their sense of Canadian pride. But when the world looks to Canada in 2021 to see how we are faring at treating diabetes 100 years later, Canadians will have less to feel proud of. Double the number of Canadians lives with diabetes than did 15 years ago, and Canada is in the worst third of developed countries for both prevalence and costs of treating the disease. The problem of diabetes is very bad, and rapidly getting worse. We need to do something bold to address this problem and mark this important anniversary in 2021.

### **Diabetes remains a large and growing burden**

Diabetes is a large and growing burden in Canada. Diabetes or prediabetes affects 1 in 3 Canadians and the International Diabetes Federation lists Canada among the worst OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries for diabetes prevalence. Beyond the immeasurable human costs of this, if prevalence grows by 40% in the next decade as projected, the health care costs associated with treating people with diabetes in Canada will top \$39 billion by 2028.

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## **A risky two-way relationship between COVID-19 and diabetes**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of Canadians with diabetes and the urgent need to address the diabetes epidemic in Canada. The World Health Organization lists diabetes as a major risk factor for COVID-19.<sup>i</sup> The Centers for Disease Control report that people with diabetes are at six times greater chance of severe COVID-19 infection, and 12 times more likely to die of it.<sup>ii</sup> In addition, there are emerging hypotheses that COVID-19 may trigger new-onset diabetes, creating a bidirectional risk relationship between COVID and diabetes.

While the urgent need to address the COVID-19 pandemic has understandably absorbed the attention of provincial and federal governments, the pandemic has shown that people with diabetes are more vulnerable to infectious diseases like COVID-19 and demonstrated how critical it is that we reduce the burden of diabetes to protect Canadians and our healthcare systems against both diabetes and other illnesses to which people with diabetes are more vulnerable.

## **Diabetes 360° is an evidence-based chronic disease solution with broad support**

Diabetes 360° is an evidence-based solution developed by 120 health stakeholders over a year of rigorous effort that will enhance the prevention, screening and management of diabetes to achieve better health for Canadians. Based on the successful 90-90-90 target adopted by UNAIDS and informed by the successes of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Diabetes 360° will reduce unnecessary health care spending by billions of dollars, improve the lives of millions of Canadians and protect Canada's productivity and competitiveness.

Implementing Diabetes 360° will help to reduce the burden not only of diabetes but of all chronic disease in Canada, which is why so many patient organizations in other chronic disease areas support its implementation.<sup>iii</sup> With a focus on reducing the prevalence and impact of common risk factors for all chronic diseases, Diabetes 360° will reduce the incidence of heart disease, stroke, obesity, some cancers and many other conditions. Diabetes 360° provides for a mechanism to integrate efforts across the chronic disease management landscape, creating synergies and a multiplier effect, which ultimately will produce much lower rates of chronic disease across Canada.

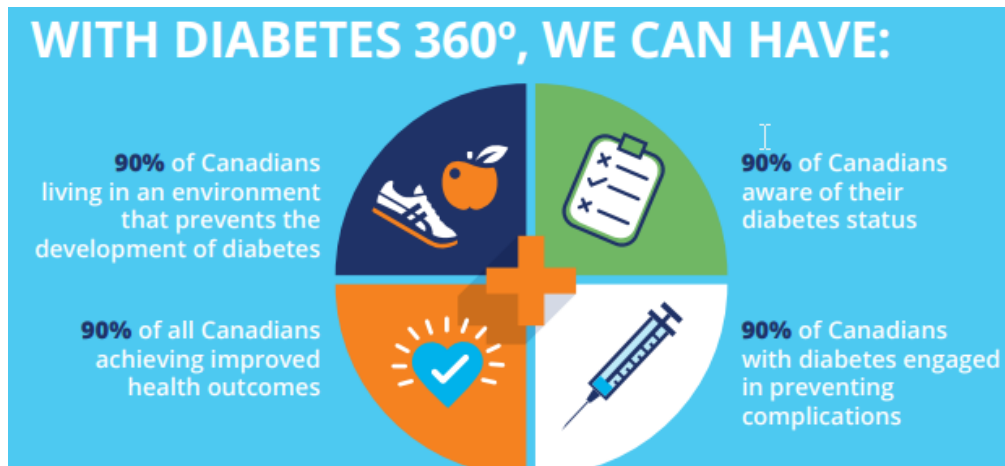
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Diabetes 360° has significant support from all major stakeholder groups. Federally, both the [Finance](#) and [Health](#) Committees have recommended Diabetes 360° for implementation. Provincially, three provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island) have publicly committed to diabetes strategies based on Diabetes 360°, and other provinces, including Ontario, are in advanced discussions about doing so. Key health stakeholders including the Canadian Medical Association and other health charities signed onto a [letter to Minister Hajdu](#) recommending Diabetes 360°. More than 220 health care providers sent [letters](#) to Minister Hajdu and each provincial Health Minister. An Angus Reid poll from June 2020 found that 87% of Canadians feel that the government should



implement a nation-wide diabetes strategy to reduce the burden of diabetes. And Canadians sent 52,000 letters to their Members of Parliament in support of this important initiative.

### A federal role in improving the health of Canadians

Part of the reason why Canada compares so poorly to other developed nations is that we have not implemented a nation-wide strategy to address the problem. Today, valiant efforts to prevent, screen for and treat diabetes are underway across Canada, but there is no coordinating framework, limited sharing of best practices and lessons learned across the provinces and territories, and little to no means of measuring the impact of diabetes programs on improving the health of Canadians. Other developed countries, including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, New Zealand and Hong Kong, have implemented national action plans and coordinated frameworks to address diabetes, to great effect.

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That is why the World Health Organization recommends that every country should have a national strategy to combat diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

A problem as large and complex as diabetes can only be addressed by committed and coordinated federal government leadership to address a complex array of contributing factors including poverty, stigma, food supply and insecurity, and environments that discourage healthy living and contribute to diabetes. With a national diabetes strategy, the federal government can help to prevent a million cases of diabetes and avoid hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations for diabetes-related consequences in the next ten years.

That's why Diabetes Canada's sole recommendation to the pre-budget consultations for Budget 2020 is that:

**The federal government should invest \$150 million in funding over seven years to support the implementation of a new nation-wide diabetes strategy, based on the Diabetes 360° framework and should facilitate the creation of Indigenous-specific strategic approaches led and owned by Indigenous groups, in honour of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian discovery of insulin in 2021.**

### **Benefits will start to accrue immediately**

To implement Diabetes 360° recommendations, the federal government should establish a national task force for approximately 7 years at a total cost of \$150 million. The mandate of this task force would be to collaborate with provincial, territorial and, if appropriate and agreeable, Indigenous governments along with academia, industry and non-governmental organizations to further plan and implement an approach to the prevention and management of diabetes in Canada. The task force should facilitate the creation of Indigenous-specific strategic approaches led and owned by any Indigenous groups wishing to embrace this framework. The goal of this task force would be to collaborate with healthcare systems to optimize disease prevention and healthcare delivery for people with diabetes, with a goal of sunsetting itself as quickly as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, Global Report on Diabetes, 2016



**Table 1: Estimated budget of proposed task force 2020-2026**

YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET
2020	\$6 million
2021	\$12 million
2022	\$18 million
2023	\$24 million
2024	\$30 million
2025	\$30 million
2026	\$30 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$150 million</b>

The opportunity to improve and coordinate prevention and management of diabetes in Canada is so great that significant benefits will begin to accrue even in year 1. For example, a virtual Diabetes Prevention Program could be delivered to any Canadians with prediabetes and prevent up to 50,000 cases of type 2 diabetes in its first year, and better transition support for young adults with type 1 diabetes can prevent hundreds of costly emergency hospitalizations across the country.

### **Diabetes 360° Supports Canada’s Economic Recovery from COVID-19**

A Diabetes 360° nation-wide strategy can support Canada’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by generating significant cost savings and additional tax revenue.

It has long been recognized that a healthy workforce is a more productive workforce. The healthier the citizens of a country, the more effective the workforce.<sup>iv</sup> In order for Canada to recover economically from COVID-19, we need to reduce the burden of other chronic disease like diabetes immediately by implementing a nation-wide approach.

The economic impact of diabetes in Canada is significant – to individuals, our health care system and our economy. In the workforce, diabetes and other preventable non-communicable diseases can lead to increased absenteeism and reduced productivity while at work, inability to work due to disease-related disability, and lost productive capacity due to early mortality and exclusion from the workplace to take care of sick family members. Employees with type 2 diabetes cost employers an estimated \$3,000 annually per employee due to reduced productivity, missed work and higher benefits costs.<sup>v vi</sup>

This, combined with the \$31 billion that treating diabetes will cost our healthcare system in 2021, means that the opportunity for savings from implementing the Diabetes 360°



strategy are significant. A full return on investment assessment can only be completed once more detailed plans for its implementation are co-created with each province and territory. However, using conservative high-level assumptions based upon peer-reviewed research, we can anticipate significant savings, both in human costs and financial ones. Briefly, it is estimated that in just seven years, Diabetes 360° can save Canada's healthcare system \$11 billion and Canada's employers – a critical engine of our economic recovery - a further \$9 billion. While many of the associated cost savings would be realized mainly by provincial and territorial governments, all levels of government will benefit from the increased productivity and tax revenue associated with this plan. Further details can be found [here](#).

## Conclusion

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Diabetes 360° is more relevant than ever. Its implementation will support public health, and deliver on the need for collaborative, value-based healthcare models and a multi-disciplinary, comprehensive approach to health care. The billions of dollars in savings that will be realized by our healthcare system when we implement Diabetes 360° are an example of the effective use of public dollars to combat chronic disease. Given that diabetes is one of the most empirically measurable chronic diseases, implementation of a comprehensive strategy to prevent, diagnose and treat diabetes based on data on patient health outcomes can serve as a useful test case for managing other chronic diseases. With strong stakeholder support and the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada in 1921 right around the corner, we urge governments to embrace Diabetes 360° now.

P.S. While our focus in this submission is on Diabetes 360°, please note that Diabetes Canada fully supports the [request of the Health Charities Coalition of Canada](#) for short-term emergency stabilization funding given the significant drop in revenue they have experienced due to COVID-19.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6924e2.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.diabetes.ca/media-room/news/an-open-letter-to-canada%E2%80%99s-minister-of-health>

<sup>iv</sup> WEF, [Outlook on the Global Agenda 2015](#)

<sup>v</sup> Janssen, [Managing Diabetes in the Workplace: Understanding the Motivated Patient](#).

<sup>vi</sup> Benefits Canada, [ROI of one life: diabetes](#)