

NEWS RELEASE

Health-care wait times in Quebec hit 16.3 weeks

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For immediate release

MONTREAL—Quebec’s median wait time for medically necessary treatment this year was 16.3 weeks, a slight increase from last year, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

Across Canada, the median wait time in 2019 was 20.9 weeks.

“Following significant improvements last year, wait times for medically necessary treatments in Quebec appear to be increasing again,” said Bacchus Barua, associate director of health policy studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada, 2019*.

The study examines the total wait time patients face across 12 medical specialties—from referral by a general practitioner (i.e. family doctor) to consultation with a specialist, to when the patient ultimately receives treatment.

It finds that Quebec’s average wait time of 16.3 weeks is longer than the 15.8 weeks physicians reported last year. In 1993, however, Quebec’s wait time was 7.3 weeks when the Fraser Institute first began tracking wait times in Canada.

Patients in Quebec waited the longest for orthopaedic surgery (29.1 weeks) and ophthalmology (21.5 weeks), and the shortest for medical oncology (4.5 weeks).

“Long waits for medical treatment aren’t a trivial matter—they can increase suffering for patients, decrease quality of life, and in the worst cases, lead to disability or death,” said Fraser Institute Senior Fellow Yanick Labrie.

Median wait times by province (in weeks)

PROVINCE	2018	2019	PROVINCE	2018	2019
British Columbia	23.2	24.0	Quebec	15.8	16.3
Alberta	26.1	28.0	New Brunswick	45.1	39.7
Saskatchewan	15.4	26.0	Nova Scotia	34.4	33.3
Manitoba	26.1	32.4	P.E.I.	39.8	49.3
Ontario	15.7	16.0	Newfoundland and Labrador	22.0	23.4

NOTE: The number of survey responses in Atlantic Canada were lower than other provinces, which may result in reported median wait times being higher or lower than those actually experienced.

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