

It was a most cruel turn of fate.

A few short years after celebrating ten years of remission from an aggressive melanoma that almost stole him from us, something just didn't seem right. For as long as I can remember, Dad had always managed a benign hand tremor. It was more of a nuisance for him than a concern.

It didn't hinder his success in business. It didn't compromise the joy he found through choral music. It didn't slow an active lifestyle in retirement that allowed him and Mom to tend to their gardens, go for walks, travel, or have dinner with friends. It didn't detract from his confidence or ability to command the attention and respect of family, friends, and strangers. It didn't impede his quality of life.

Until it did.

Parkinson's is a lifelong, incurable disease that occurs when brain cells involved in mobility and coordination die. As a progressive disease, symptoms slowly worsen, and new ones develop. While Parkinson's is known for its movement-related symptoms, non-movement symptoms such as anxiety and depression, sleep issues, thinking problems, and dementia can also occur. There are more than [35 Parkinson's symptoms](#), varying from person to person making everyone's experience—and that of their loved ones and caregivers—unique. Since his diagnosis in 2019, my father has quite rapidly experienced many of these. He soundly beat Cancer. But he will always live with Parkinson's.

On October 24, I will join my board colleagues at Parkinson Canada, senior executives, advisory council members and those with lived experience in Ottawa to seize ministers, public officials, and Members of Parliament with the critical role government levels must play in ensuring Canadians living with Parkinson's are supported and empowered to not only manage this disease but to flourish.

Canada has one of the highest rates of Parkinson's in the world, with more than [100,000 Canadians](#) living with the disease. Every day [30 people](#) in Canada are diagnosed, and that number will grow to [50 people per day](#) in less than a decade. While there is no known cure for Parkinson's or disease-modifying therapies, there are steps to take to provide a growing and aging population with better access to pathways for living well.

Living well with Parkinson's is *still possible*. We are calling on the government to work with us on three key areas.

Access to financial support. People with Parkinson's and their care partners face increased expenses from living with a chronic and progressive illness. The cost of housing, equipment, and treatments is a significant economic burden and inflation has made affordability more challenging. The Canada Disability Benefit offers a real opportunity for Canadians living with disabilities, including people with Parkinson's. To deliver on the promise of a meaningful and accessible benefit, government must ensure the needs and realities of people living with disabilities are central to its development.

Medication is one essential component of the right treatment plan for Parkinson's. Those affected experience many challenges in accessing necessary medicines, however, Canada can be a leader in medication access. We require a federal *Pharmacare Act* focusing on affordable, equitable access to medicines. The government should find solutions to ensure Canadians can access the best medicines available and close the gap left by discontinued medicines.

Finally, care for those with Parkinson's requires treatment from a team of physicians, specialists, and allied health professionals, including physiotherapists, and occupational and speech therapists, often in specialized clinics that can be difficult to access. Ensuring Canada has the right healthcare providers to not only diagnose but help patients manage life with Parkinson's is critical. The government has a role to play in addressing our current health human resource challenges. Specifically, it must work with provinces and territories to ensure there are appropriate specialists being trained and entering practice to support the growing need for more specialized care.

My family's Parkinson's journey is personal. But it's a journey shared by tens of thousands of families in Canada—and will be shared by tens of thousands more in the years ahead. Such a collective experience creates a national

imperative our governments are simply obligated to confront. It's the very least we can offer those to whom we owe so much.