

Hello and welcome - I am Liz Loewen, vice chair of the Parkinson Canada Advisory Council, and am one of the more than 100,000 Canadians living with Parkinson's Disease. Today, we are gathered to address the challenges faced by individuals like me and the 30 more Canadians who are diagnosed every day.

Parkinson Canada's advocacy team has been tirelessly working to ensure that our political leaders, at both the federal and regional levels, understand the hurdles we face. While healthcare delivery falls primarily under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, we look to the federal government for support in the form of financial aid and encouragement to improve access to medicine and specialists.

I am one of the many varied faces of Parkinson's. Like many with young onset Parkinson's – it has shortened my career during my peak earning years. I don't know what the future will hold – How fast will it progress? How will this impact my spouse and children? Will I be able to care for my aging parents? Parkinson's has social, financial, and physical impacts well beyond the “tremor” that many think of. With support, a fulfilling and productive life is “still possible” even in the face of a progressive and unpredictable condition.

We've put forth a set of crucial recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance, developed with the collective wisdom and experiences of our community:

1. Address eligibility issues with the Disability Tax Credit.
2. Design the Canada Disability Benefit with input from those with disabilities, including people living with Parkinson's, to ensure accessible and meaningful support for all.
3. Implement the Canada Pharmacare Act with a focus on affordable and equitable access to medicines.
4. Find solutions that ensure Canadians have access to best medicines available and work to close the gap left by discontinued medications, which are available in other countries such as the UK and USA.
5. Work with the provinces and territories to train more specialists, particularly Movement Disorder Specialists to support the need for more Parkinson's informed care over time.

I invite you all to join us in our vision for a Canada where financial stress is reduced, accessibility gaps for medicines and specialist care are bridged, and those with Parkinson's can truly thrive. Community support and advocacy efforts have made a profound difference in my life and the lives of others I know.

I encourage you to stand with us in this important cause. Together, we will ensure that living well with Parkinson's is not just a dream but a reality. Thank you for your support and let us rise together to make a profound difference in the lives of those with Parkinson's across our nation.