



February 21. 2023

Stephen Brown
Deputy Minister of Health
British Columbia

RE. CAR T-cell therapy

Dear Mr. Brown,

On behalf of the cancer collaborative, the Advocacy for Canadian Childhood Oncology Research Network (Ac2orn), the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada (LLSC), Lymphoma Canada and Myeloma Canada, we congratulate your ministry for recently making commercially available CAR T-cell therapy available for British Columbians out of province.

This is a step in the right direction, however, in order to fulfill your promise to *ensure patients get care when they need it, where they need it*, British Columbia must provide access to this potentially life saving therapy within its own borders. The patients who are eligible to receive this treatment are in the relapse or refractory setting, and CAR-T therapy is often the only remaining effective treatment option. These patients, who have already received multiple lines of therapy, may be very sick and the added burden of travel out of province to receive CAR-T treatment is a significant barrier to care.

While patients may receive assistance for travel and lodging by the manufacturers, there is a lack of understanding of the financial, physical, and emotional impact this has on both the person with cancer and the caregiver. Consider the caregiver, who will need to take the time off work, away from family and other responsibilities. The patient, who may have other comorbidities, including physical pain, and will need to endure a six hour flight to the nearest province that has the capacity to treat them.

Add on the current travel delays and uncertainties brought on by the pandemic for patients whose life depends on their ability to travel to another province for care. We understand that the implementation of CAR-T can be challenging, but we know that BC has both the clinical experts and the infrastructure to provide in province access to CAR-T.

Across Canada, we have seen provinces take the necessary actions to make this potentially life saving therapy accessible to their constituents closer to home. As you are aware, Nova Scotia recently opened a centre for Atlantic Canada. Alberta will be opening a second centre in Edmonton, joining Quebec and Ontario who have been operating multiple centres within their



provinces. Saskatchewan¹ and Manitoba² also announced in their budgets the allocation of significant resources to provide this innovative treatment to Canadians with cancer close to home.

Immediate action is necessary to ensure *British Columbians receive better care closer to home as they go through their cancer journey*. Your government ran on a cancer plan that included funding for CAR T-cell therapy. We urge you to consider this as you announce your budget shortly.

Sincerely,

sabrina hanna
managing director
the cancer collaborative

On behalf of

Keith McIntosh . Chair
Advocacy for Canadian Childhood Oncology
Research Network (Ac2orn)

Christina Sit. Manager, Community &
Stakeholder Relations
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada
(LLSC)

Antonella Rizza . Chief Executive Officer
Lymphoma Canada

Martine Elias . Executive Director
Myeloma Canada



cc. The Honorable David Eby. Premier and President of Executive Council. British Columbia
The Honorable Adian Dix. Minister of Health. British Columbia

¹ Budget 2022-23 Delivers Record Investments In Saskatchewan’s Health Care System

² Manitoba government invests \$6.6 Million to create innovative CAR-T cancer therapy program at CancerCare Manitoba