

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Poor Health Among Men Costs Canada \$36.9 Billion a Year

*Canadian Men's Health Week aims for big improvements through small changes*

Vancouver—Canadian Men's Health Week is kicking off with an urgent message: Unhealthy lifestyle choices are running rampant, and they are costing this country an arm and a leg.

A ground-breaking study released today shows that smoking, excess weight, over-consumption of alcohol and physical inactivity are some of the leading causes of chronic disease among Canadian men. The annual economic burden attributable to these four factors is staggering: \$36.9 billion. No wonder the second annual Canadian Men's Health Week is striving to raise awareness about this issue and is encouraging men to make small but essential changes to their lifestyles.

“The cost of men's poor health is a huge problem that more and more people are talking about,” says Dr. Larry Goldenberg, the founder of the Canadian Men's Health Foundation (CMHF). “Encouraging men to make some changes in their lifestyle is helping to prevent up to 70% of these problems without adding another doctor or hospital to the health care system.”

The study, commissioned by CMHF, breaks down the economic burden: Direct health care accounts for \$11.9 billion, with the remaining \$25.1 billion caused by premature mortality (\$14.0 billion), short-term disability (\$2.4 billion) and long-term disability (\$8.6 billion). Of this, \$13.0 billion is attributable to smoking, \$11.9 billion to excess weight, \$7.6 billion to alcohol, and \$4.4 billion to inactivity.\*

These four risk factors contribute to approximately 40 different chronic conditions including 78% of chronic lung diseases, 73% of cancers of the head and neck, 72% of lung cancers, 67% of type 2 diabetes, 58% of heart diseases, 56% of strokes, 52% of colorectal cancers, and 30% of chronic back pain.

“This report reaffirms that healthy life choices by British Columbians are helping lower the strain on the health system,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “It's why our government places a high priority on supporting those healthy lifestyle choices. This report is a reminder for all men of how critically important it is for every one of us try to make better choices – to live tobacco free, eat well, participate in regular physical activities, and to do what we can to prevent chronic disease.”

Scotiabank is a CMHF partner for Men's Health Week. Their Chief Economist Warren Jestin said, “This report is a wake-up call for all of us about the huge personal and economic costs associated with excess weight, inactivity, smoking and drinking among Canadian men. The personal costs associated with family tragedy are incalculable. However, the study's estimate that men's poor lifestyle choices are costing Canadians \$11 billion in short and long term disability is a very big deal to the business sector, and to provincial governments struggling to

contain health care costs that already absorb more than 40 cents of every dollar spent on programs.”

“Its not all or nothing, even small improvements in nutrition and activity add up to big benefits later,” says Wayne Hartrick, President of CMHF. “Our dontchangemuch.ca website is devoted to helping men make small steps like ordering half, fries, half salad when eating out.”

“While the economic costs are high, the effects on men’s families and communities are even higher,” adds Dr. Goldenberg. “Widows account for 45% of all women aged 65 and over. We men need to start making changes to take better care of ourselves, not just for us, but also for the people who count on us and for our communities.”

\*Numbers will not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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### **About Canadian Men’s Health Week**

The second annual Canadian Men’s Health Week is an awareness campaign by the Canadian Men’s Health Foundation. The goal is to create an annual focal point for collaboration among people who care about men’s health. Visit [CanadianMensHealthWeek.ca](http://CanadianMensHealthWeek.ca) to participate.

### **About Canadian Men’s Health Foundation**

Canadian Men’s Health Foundation (CMHF) is a national, non-profit organization founded by Order of Canada recipient Dr. Larry Goldenberg. The mission of CMHF is to inspire Canadian men to live healthier lives. 70% of men’s health problems can be prevented by adopting healthy lifestyles. CMHF will create a new social awareness and motivate men and their families using health information and lifestyle programs in ways they can hear, absorb, and act on.

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