

## ***Prince Edward Island First in Canada to Lower Colorectal Cancer Screening Age to 45***

*Landmark move sets a national precedent  
as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month concludes*

**Montréal, March 30, 2026** – Colorectal Cancer Canada (CCC) and the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) are applauding a landmark move by the Government of Prince Edward Island to lower the starting age for routine colorectal cancer screening to 45 for average-risk individuals, making PEI the first province in Canada to do so.

Announced as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month comes to a close, the decision represents a major public health milestone and an important step forward in responding to the growing incidence of colorectal cancer among younger adults across Canada.

This milestone is dedicated in part to the memory of former Minister Mark McLane, a committed advocate for the health of Islanders whose passing is deeply felt by the colorectal cancer community.

### **March 10 Hill Day brought the Screen at 45 campaign to Parliament Hill**

Momentum behind this policy shift continued to grow earlier this month when CCC brought its [Screen at 45](#) campaign to Parliament Hill.

On March 10, patients, survivors, caregivers, and healthcare professionals from across Canada gathered in Ottawa, meeting with Members of Parliament and ministerial staff to call for the routine colorectal cancer screening age to be lowered to 45.

Among them was Jocelyn Laidlaw, CCC's National Ambassador and a colorectal cancer survivor, who shared her story in meetings throughout the day. Her testimony, together with those of fellow advocates, early-onset colorectal cancer patients, and survivors, made clear that this is not just a policy debate, but an urgent issue of timely detection and survival for Canadians in their 40s who are currently excluded from routine screening guidelines.

CCC representatives met throughout the day with MPs and staff from multiple parties and regions. Supporting the delegation's message, Dr. Darren Brenner of the University of Calgary presented evidence-based modeling showing that lowering the screening age to 45 across Canada could save lives while also generating significant healthcare system savings making the change a cost-effective approach.

### **Screen at 45 : from Campaign to Policy**

CCC launched its national [Screen at 45](#) campaign last June, urging governments to lower the starting age for colorectal cancer screening of individuals at average risk to 45. Since then, it has engaged provincial and federal health ministries, as well as public health leaders across

Canada, to emphasize the urgent need for reform and advance jurisdiction-specific modeling as a path to implementation.

From the outset, the campaign's message has been consistent: the evidence supports earlier screening, the economic rationale is compelling, and Canadians are ready for change. Prince Edward Island's decision now illustrates what can happen when governments act on evidence and take a forward-looking approach to cancer prevention.

### **Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month ends, but the urgency does not**

While PEI's announcement is a major step forward, Barry D. Stein, President of Colorectal Cancer Canada, says much more work remains. Across Canada, colorectal cancer is still being diagnosed too late and too often, not because screening does not work, but because too many eligible people do not know they should be screened or have not yet taken part in their provincial or territorial screening programs.

For Canadians aged 50 to 74, biennial screening with the fecal immunochemical test (FIT) remains one of the most effective tools for early detection. The FIT is free, non-invasive, and can be done at home.

For Canadians aged 45 to 49, today's announcement makes one thing clear: earlier screening is possible, and access should not be determined by postal code.

### **Quotes**

"Prince Edward Island is setting a powerful example for the rest of Canada by becoming the first province to lower the starting age for average-risk colorectal cancer screening to 45. At Colorectal Cancer Canada, through our Screen at 45 campaign, we have called for this change because the evidence is clear: screening earlier can detect colorectal cancer sooner, prevent cancers from developing, and ultimately save lives. We commend PEI for its leadership and urge other provinces and territories to follow without delay."

- **Barry D. Stein, President & CEO of Colorectal Cancer Canada.**

"We're proud to be the first province in Canada to lower the age for colorectal cancer screening—because this is about saving lives. For islanders, this means more chances to catch cancer early, when it's most treatable, and more families getting more time together. It's a practical step that will lead to better outcomes and fewer lives lost."

- **Hon. Cory Deagle, Minister of Health and Wellness, Prince Edward Island.**

"Colorectal cancer is increasingly affecting younger Canadians, and Prince Edward Island's decision to lower the starting age for screening to 45—the first province in Canada to do so—will help detect more cancers earlier, when treatment is most effective. To save more lives, we urge all provinces and territories to follow PEI's lead. Everyone in Canada deserves

timely access to screening that reflects today's cancer trends, and jurisdictions that act quickly can help change the trajectory of colorectal cancer.”

- **Dr. Stuart Edmonds, Executive Vice President, Mission, Research and Advocacy, Canadian Cancer Society**

### **About Colorectal Cancer Canada**

**Colorectal Cancer Canada** (CCC) is Canada's national colorectal cancer patient led non-for-profit organization. Since 1998, it has been dedicated to colorectal cancer awareness and education, supporting patients and caregivers, and advocating on their behalf. CCC's mission is to reduce the incidence and mortality of colorectal cancer in Canada and to improve the quality of life for patients, their families and caregivers.

Website : [www.colorectalcancercanada.com](http://www.colorectalcancercanada.com)

Social: Facebook, Instagram, X : [@coloncanada](https://www.instagram.com/coloncanada)

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