



# CASE FOR SUPPORT 2024

*Includes 2023 Annual Report*



## Join Us on Second Street

Late in 2023 SecondStreet.org released its annual *Died on a Waiting List* report. Now in its fifth year, the report revealed 17,032 patients died while on government waitlists in 2022-23. Our findings suggest a 64% increase in annual surgical waitlist deaths since 2018. Worse, since multiple health bodies provided our research team with incomplete or no data, the true total number of deaths last year is likely closer to 31,000.

The report earned widespread media coverage, especially in print. And while many headlines across the country advance the important work we do, the most impactful and memorable content could be found under the stories in the many comments submitted by readers.

One comment written by Ed stood out: “My friend’s 62-year-old brother-in-law was having chest pains, so he went to emergency. It was a six hour wait so he went home. Next morning, he got up, had a heart attack, and died. He won’t count in this statistic, but the system killed him just the same.”

It’s reasonable to take any story posted in an online comments section with a grain of salt, but even so, it’s true there are documented cases of people dying in waiting rooms, people leaving emergency rooms because waits are too long,

and now, emergency rooms being closed altogether. Here’s the point: the statistics and data above don’t stick the way Ed’s story does. As the dictator Stalin famously said: “one death is a tragedy, one million is a statistic.”

When SecondStreet.org was launched five years ago, the vision was to create a new think tank that would marry original public policy research and policy prescriptions with personal stories, showing how everyday people are affected by government policy decisions, for better or worse.

For example, a video we released last year shares the story of Toronto patient Jerry who faced a year-long wait for knee surgery. In so doing, he experienced chronic pain, couldn’t walk with his friends, enjoy motorcycle rides or help out around the house. Our video showed that if Canada copied a policy in the European Union (EU) known as the Cross Border Directive, patients like Jerry would be better off. In short, the policy allows EU patients to go to other EU countries, pay for surgery and then be reimbursed by their home government. This opens up thousands of options for patients instead of just relying on local providers. A SecondStreet.org report released in 2023 explains this policy in detail.

Public opinion polling we commissioned from Leger in 2023 found 74% of respondents supported the concept of a Cross Border Directive in Canada. Commissioned polling undertaken by SecondStreet.org throughout the year is shared with media, elected officials, and stakeholders to foster discussion and inform decision makers.

The EU example is important because policy reform can be adopted. What are other countries doing to provide universal health coverage with better outcomes and often, at lower cost? Last year, SecondStreet.org went to Stockholm and interviewed a number of health care providers, experts, and stakeholders to create content that will show what different policies look like in practice and what Canada might learn. Sweden was the first country examined. We plan to highlight the practices and lessons from several more countries going forward.

SecondStreet.org examines a number of public policy issues and stories including our *Survivors of Socialism* series, energy policy and education to name a few. Health care reform has been paramount – and will remain so into 2024 – for the simple reason that problems in Canadian health care are so incredibly acute that civil society organizations like ours must, out of necessity, do all we can to advance policy solutions to ease patient suffering.

One of our projects planned for 2024 is a promoted website called *PatientOptions.ca* that will be a “one-stop-shop” that provides patients on forced government wait lists with a host of tips and information on medical options available to them both domestically (where it exists) and internationally. The site will provide information on options both in the government system and in the private system. Are their strategies to move up government waitlists? Are there reimbursements available if one pays privately? What are the rules for submitting medical expenses with your taxes?

Our research and our stories are important, but in talking to so many people adversely impacted by health care rationing, we’ve decided to leverage some of our growing expertise to create a tangible resource for patients who are often scared, confused and simply don’t know where to start in navigating what alternatives might exist.

Our work and our profile continue to gain prominence. In 2023, we launched a new current affairs TV program: *On Second Street*. Hosted by President Colin Craig, the show can be found on *The News Forum* – a national cable news channel – opening the door to millions of households across the country. It allows us to showcase our stories and research alongside discussions with other thought leaders and decision makers from across the country.

Our volunteer board of directors, led by Kip Woodward, have put plans in place focused on growth both organizationally and in advancing our content. Revenues in 2023 were up 16.7% over the previous year. It has allowed us to grow our staff, create new content and expand our presence on social media. We have set ambitious goals for our team over the next three years.

Will you join us on Second Street? We welcome the opportunity to earn both moral and financial support to bring stories and content to life aimed at improving public policy outcomes and prosperity for Canadians from coast to coast.



**Troy Lanigan**  
Founder &  
Managing Director





## VISION

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A prosperous, free Canada where all can pursue happiness. We see opportunity, choice and responsibility as three pillars for the successful, self-governing nation envisioned by Canada's founders.

## MISSION

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To tell the stories of ordinary Canadians and their families, and show how public policy choices harm or help their prosperity, freedom and lives.





## BACKGROUND

Troy Lanigan and Mark Milke founded SecondStreet.org in 2017.

Their observation was that public policy research and discussion would gain more traction amongst the public, stakeholders and lawmakers if it was better connected to real life experiences. They sought to put a face to numbers and statistics primarily through short videos and articles, but also to give a voice to Canadians by sharing their stories with the media and lawmakers seeking public input.

Moreover, while SecondStreet.org would undertake original research, it would also advance the work of other think tanks where public policy issues and the search for solutions overlapped with its own stories and narratives.

After writing a business plan in 2017, the pair sought seed capital in 2018 that would eventually secure the hiring of a full-time president, Colin Craig, late in 2018. After a short period of capacity

building that included development of a student internship program, SecondStreet.org was launched publicly in February 2019. This year, SecondStreet.org celebrates its 5th anniversary!

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Second Street is the most common street name in Canada – there is one in almost every community across the country. Symbolically, it is where people live, work, learn, pray, shop, eat – it's where lives are lived, discussions had, experiences shaped.

Whether it's a local infrastructure project, provincial environmental regulation or the federal government's response to a pandemic, people are having conversations and exchanging their experiences on Second Street. SecondStreet.org seeks to gather those experiences, examine the public policy choices involved and advance options that support improved prosperity, freedom and livelihoods.

## 2023 AT A GLANCE

7

**7 policy briefs**

produced from original research. This year SecondStreet.org released considerable research on health care reform as well as content related to K-12 education, the government's push for electric vehicles and more.

60

**60 original videos**

on a wide range of topics, including: patients describing their experiences with Canada's health care system, health care lessons from Sweden, education reform, housing costs and our mini documentary – *Defund Putin*.

3.9

**3.9 million impressions**

– Canadians saw our think tank's work millions of times through social media – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram.

1.8

**1.8 million online views**

of SecondStreet.org's videos – up 50% from last year.

33

**33 columns**

published by major media outlets more than 50 times.

67

**67 television and radio interviews**

across Canada to discuss SecondStreet.org research.

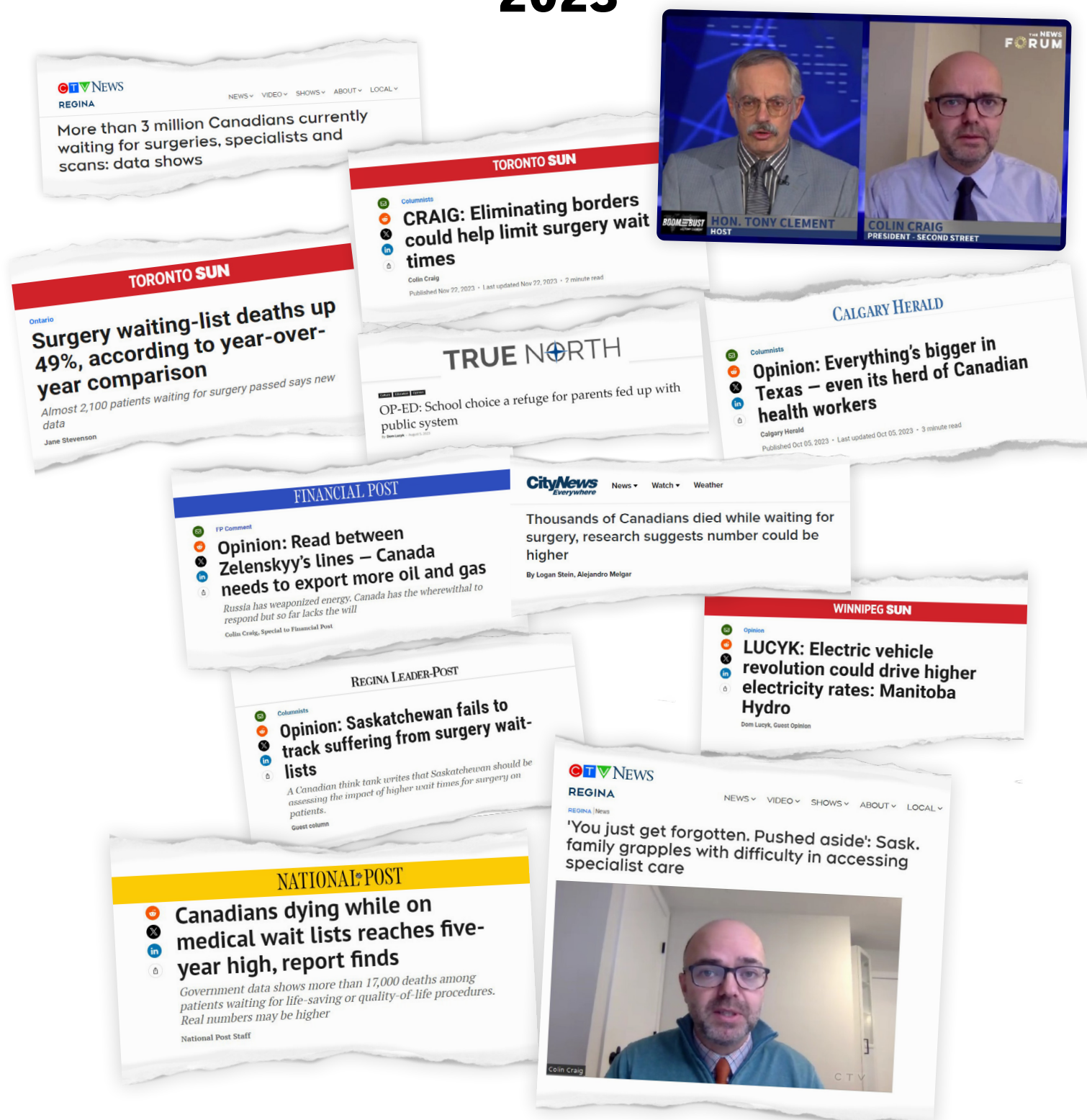


In one of SecondStreet.org's short videos from 2023, Communications Director Dom Lucyk explains how the Windsor Regional Hospital has lost \$2 million by staffing and running its own Tim Hortons.



# SAMPLE OF NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

## 2023



See more of SecondStreet.org's media coverage at

[secondstreet.org/in-the-news](https://secondstreet.org/in-the-news)

# FINANCIALS

Revenues	2024*	2023**	2022
• Donations	\$802,500	\$720,929	\$620,438
• Other	\$7,500	\$4,645	\$1,182
Total	\$810,000	\$725,574	\$621,620

Expenses	2024*	2023**	2022
• Salaries, benefits, and subcontractors	\$564,200	\$483,298	\$362,849
• Research, videos, and equipment	\$98,700	\$73,755	\$111,341
• Advertising	\$27,500	\$49,318	\$46,422
• Bank charges	\$3,500	\$3,899	\$2,744
• Other	\$114,250	\$83,506	\$26,269
Total	\$808,150	\$693,777	\$549,625
Surplus / deficit	\$1,850	\$31,797	\$71,995

\* 2024 Budget

\*\* 2023 Audit not complete at time of publication



Paula Iturri joined SecondStreet.org at the end of 2023 as our new Outreach Director. She'll be working to bring more important stories to life and provide a new face to SecondStreet.org content in 2024.



# ISSUE PROFILE: HEALTH REFORM

Polls show that Canadians are ready for health reform.

A 2023 survey by Ipsos found that 85% of Canadians believe “*drastic changes*” are needed to improve the health care system. Other polls suggest Canada is finally ready to embrace reform after decades of patient suffering under the status quo.

This is why SecondStreet.org has made health reform our top priority.

We’re working hard to make sure Canadians are aware of effective policy solutions that can improve patient outcomes, and provide more choice in terms of the services available. Equally important, we’re also working to make sure elected officials are aware of these constructive solutions as they explore health reform.

Another part of SecondStreet.org’s work on health care reform involves shining a light on patient stories from coast to coast. The conversation on health care can’t just be about numbers: Canadians need to understand what patients are experiencing.

One story we shared was that of Stefanos Michelis, a father of two from Toronto. He described to SecondStreet.org how his four-year-old son had to wait three years for surgery. At one point, the young boy even required a catheter and was in a lot of pain. Incredibly, it wasn’t until Stefanos and his wife took their story to the media that their son finally received a date for surgery.



Stefanos Michelis describes his young son’s three-year wait for surgery in Ontario.

SecondStreet.org has also released a number of important research papers, including two on the EU’s “Cross Border Directive.” This policy empowers all EU patients to pay for surgery in other EU countries and receive reimbursement from their home governments. If local wait times are too long, this policy opens up thousands of options for patients to receive surgery more quickly. Needless to say, Canadian patients could benefit from a similar policy.

This research involves gathering and examining government data nation-wide on the number of patients that die each year while waiting for treatment. The 2023 report received widespread media coverage and reinforced the urgent need for reform.

Through our “CanadaWaits.ca” page we regularly update important statistics such as the number of patients waiting for treatment, national wait times, spending on health care and constructive policy solutions.

In the coming months, we will be releasing more patient stories, putting out more research and launching PatientOptions.ca. The new site will provide patients with insight about how to navigate long wait times in Canada’s public system, and it will include helpful information about pursuing private options within Canada and abroad.



SecondStreet.org prepared to interview a retired politician in Sweden about their health care system.

## ISSUE PROFILE: SURVIVORS OF SOCIALISM

Some politicians, university professors and activists praise socialism and communism as utopian systems that should be embraced in Canada. In 2013, now-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau infamously expressed his admiration for China, saying, “their basic dictatorship is actually allowing them to turn their economy around on a dime.”

Advocates of such regimes might benefit from watching SecondStreet.org’s *Survivors of Socialism* project, which emphasizes the trail of devastation these systems have left in their wake. *Survivors of Socialism* sought to shine a light on communist and socialist ideologies by speaking with Canadians who previously lived under their regimes.

SecondStreet.org has spoken with expatriates from a wide array of countries, including Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, China, the former Soviet Union and more. Boris Rassin, who grew up in Latvia while it was controlled by the Soviet Union, told us a shocking story that highlighted censorship and food supply problems under its former regime. Boris explained how the Soviet government destroyed old cookbooks because it didn’t want citizens wondering why so many ingredients and foods no longer existed under communism.

In the year ahead, we will be releasing more interviews, including Enzo’s story. The young Venezuelan father spoke with SecondStreet.org about why his family fled the troubled socialist country. By all accounts, the South American country should be wealthy – it has large oil reserves, diamonds, gold and beautiful beaches for tourism. Yet, the “socialist paradise” is just the latest country to prove that socialism in theory is different than socialism in practice.



Ana Rizo speaks with SecondStreet.org about living in Venezuela during Hugo Chavez’s socialist reign. Ana has since joined SecondStreet.org and is helping us tell more *Survivors of Socialism* stories.

## ISSUE PROFILE: EDUCATION

51% of Canadians believe the K-12 education system has gone in the wrong direction in the last two decades. That’s according to a May 2023 Leger poll commissioned by SecondStreet.org.

What’s particularly striking is that the dissatisfaction rate with the direction of the public school system is up from 32% just two-and-a-half years prior.

What could be the cause of such a shift? It’s hard to say for certain. Changes to school policies? Controversial sexual and race-related content that’s being taught in schools? New methods for teaching mathematics that often frustrate parents? This is something SecondStreet.org plans to research in 2024.

If governments provided more choice, they could increase satisfaction among parents. In particular, charter schools could help. These are schools that are run independently, but are funded with tax dollars. In Alberta, charter schools provide parents with more choice as they tend to specialize – one school may spend more time on teaching the trades while another focuses on science and math.

As you can see, this approach is especially helpful for lower income parents who may be dissatisfied with the public system, but lack the resources to send their children to private schools.

Provincial governments could also allow a portion of parents’ tax dollars to follow their child when they send them to independent schools and private schools or to help defray the cost of homeschooling. This is something that only half the provinces do right now.

In the years ahead, SecondStreet.org will be spending more time on exploring education reform that can improve results for students while giving parents more choice.



# ON SECOND STREET: OUR NEW NATIONAL CABLE TV SHOW

In 2023, SecondStreet.org launched a new public affairs TV show – *On Second Street* – on The News Forum channel. The News Forum is the latest official national news broadcaster to join CTV, CBC and RDI across Canada.

Our current affairs cable TV show is a great vehicle for discussing our latest research, the research of peer organizations and other emerging public policy issues. In 2023, we covered everything from health care and the nation's housing crisis to government spending and education reform.

Just as we've been doing since our inception, we've been sharing stories that feature everyday Canadians and examining how government policies affect them.

To learn more about tuning in, please visit – [www.thenewsforum.ca/where-to-watch](http://www.thenewsforum.ca/where-to-watch)



*"We are excited to have SecondStreet.org join our line-up of news and public affairs shows. We believe they bring an important voice to public policy discourse in Canada."*

– **Tore Stautland**

Founder, *The News Forum*

THE NEWS  
**FORUM**

# Our Team

## Our Staff & Contributors



**Troy Lanigan**  
Founder & Managing Director



**Colin Craig**  
President



**Melanie Harvie**  
Executive Secretary



**Heidi McKillop**  
Contributor



**Ana Rizo**  
Contributor



**Dom Lucyk**  
Communications Director



**James Skinner**  
Contributor



**Kristen Schulz**  
Contributor



**Paula Iturri**  
Outreach Director

## Our Board



**C.C. (Kip) Woodward**  
Board Chair



**Scott Hennig**  
Director



**Tracy Johnson**  
Director



**Steven Muchnik**  
Director



**Walter Robinson**  
Director



# Moving Our Work Forward

SecondStreet.org is a unique think tank in Canada.

We conduct public policy research just as our peers do, but what sets us apart is that we tell the stories behind the numbers.

We use storytelling as a way to discuss public policy issues – strong narratives connect with people in ways that numbers cannot. Stories are memorable and “stick” with the public long after a statistic is forgotten.

We complement the stories we share by providing solid, ground-breaking research, offering proven policy solutions, working collaboratively with others and utilizing new strategies to reach broader audiences.

SecondStreet.org is focused on three core public policy areas: **improving health care** for patients, in terms of both access and outcomes; **education reform**, in particular, reforms that give parents more choice when it

comes to the education offerings available for their children; and **examining the consequences of socialism**, using real-world examples to show Canadians – and especially our young people – what dangerous but fashionable ideologies including communism look like in practice.

SecondStreet.org is sharing the stories and information many politicians and legacy media either don't bother with or don't want you to see.

Now, in our fifth year, we are finding our voice as a key player in Canada's public policy landscape – particularly on the important issue of health care reform.

Will you join us? SecondStreet.org is a registered Canadian charity.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you in moving our work forward.



**For donation inquiries, please contact  
Troy Lanigan at: [troy@secondstreet.org](mailto:troy@secondstreet.org)**

**Or donate online at:  
[www.secondstreet.org/donate](http://www.secondstreet.org/donate)**



*SecondStreet.org fact checks actor Jim Carrey's comments on Canada's health care system.*



Real People.  
Real Stories.