



CASE FOR SUPPORT 2026

Includes 2025 Annual Report





Join Us on Second Street

Debbie Fewster had three children and ten grand children. She loved family dinners, gardening, and volunteering at her church in Manitoba. In August 2023, doctors told Debbie she needed urgent heart surgery—within three weeks. Time mattered.

Debbie did what patients are told to do. She waited. Weeks passed. Then months.

Debbie never got the surgery. She was never even given a date for surgery.

She made it to Thanksgiving. She sat down for dinner with her family—one more meal together. Shortly after, Debbie suffered a heart attack and died.

Her family was devastated. They told us that if they had known at the beginning that surgery wouldn't have been provided in time, they would have taken their mother abroad for treatment.

Debbie's story struck a deep chord with us. We felt we had to do something.

Working closely with Debbie's family, SecondStreet.org drafted what became known as *Debbie's Law*—a policy requiring health authorities to notify patients when care cannot be provided in a timely manner, so they can seek alternatives. Too often, patients are asked to trust a system that knows it cannot deliver care in time—but does not say so. Families are left clinging to reassurance instead of being given the information they need to make urgent, potentially life-saving decisions.

In 2025, private members' bills inspired by Debbie's Law were introduced in both the Manitoba and British Columbia legislatures. In both cases, provincial lawmakers publicly credited SecondStreet.org for bringing the idea forward. It was a clear demonstration

of how real stories, paired with serious policy work, can create opportunities to change laws and improve outcomes.

An old mentor of mine was fond of asking a simple question: *How do you eat an elephant?* One bite at a time.

Meaningful reform rarely happens all at once. It requires credible research, creative communications, and, above all, persistence. In 2025, SecondStreet.org published 10 policy briefs and papers, including our seminal annual report measuring the number of Canadians who tragically die while waiting for government-funded care.

Our videos, combining real stories with clear public policy explanations, were viewed more than 8 million times and thousands of Canadians joined our lists to stay informed and help share our work.

Some of our most important and well-received work focuses on lessons from universal health care systems that consistently deliver

better results than Canada's. In 2025, we released in-depth video investigations from France and Lithuania, followed by our most ambitious project yet: Japan.

Japan operates a universal health care system with virtually no waitlists. Our goal was to understand how it works—and to press Canadian lawmakers to learn from, and adopt, proven best practices.

Thankfully, the Alberta government has acted on some of our recommendations. While its health care system faces real challenges, the province has introduced ambitious reforms, including activity-based hospital funding, allow patients to pay for surgery in the province, and direct-pay diagnostics.

Meaningful reform rarely happens all at once. It requires credible research, creative communications, and, above all, persistence.

These changes won't transform the system overnight, but international evidence shows they can significantly improve outcomes if given the opportunity to take hold.

That is one of the strengths of a federation: one size does not fit all. Policy successes in one province can be adopted—or avoided—in another. This is true in health care, and it is equally true in education.

In 2025, SecondStreet continued to expand its focus on education reform, building on work already underway and applying the same evidence-based, story-driven approach that has shaped our health care efforts. We released a study showing charter school students outperforming their peers by nearly a full grade level on provincial exams. We complemented this research with a video series featuring parents and classrooms in action, and dedicated multiple episodes of our national TV program, *On Second Street*, to education policy and school choice.

We also advanced our practical support for families through the launch of SchoolOptions.ca, building on the success of PatientOptions.ca, which debuted in 2024. PatientOptions.ca gives families clear, practical information about wait times, treatment options, and what to do when care cannot be delivered in time. SchoolOptions.ca applies the same empowerment model to education—helping parents navigate school choice, independent schooling, tutoring, and available government supports.

This work will continue to grow. In 2026, SecondStreet will begin education lessons from abroad, mirroring the success of our health care lessons from abroad series by looking at not only what works, but why—and the stories of families and classrooms behind higher performing systems. We will begin by examining successful academy schools in the United Kingdom.

Looking Ahead

Late in 2025, our board approved an ambitious new three-year strategic plan focused on growth and impact. Growth matters—not for its own sake, but because meaningful reform only happens when public demand becomes impossible to ignore. Reaching more Canadians, engaging more supporters, and strengthening our resources allows us to shift debates from the margins to the mainstream.

As powerful as Debbie's story is—and as eye-opening as our annual *Died on a Waiting List* report remains—none of it matters unless solutions are advanced, adopted, and defended. The introduction of Debbie's Law in two legislatures is encouraging. Alberta's early health care reforms offer real opportunity. But progress rarely comes because governments lead. It comes because citizens insist.

SecondStreet.org's role is to give that frustration direction—by grounding it in evidence, amplifying real stories, and building the public support needed to ensure lawmakers can no longer ignore the demand for reform.

Along with our board and staff, we invite you to stand with us in 2026—to help build that public momentum, amplify the voices of Canadians who deserve better, and push for reforms that turn frustration into lasting change.

Thank you for your support.

Troy Lanigan
Founder & CEO



Background

Named after Canada's most common street name, SecondStreet.org is a free-market think tank that conducts original research, but is unique in that it tells the stories behind the numbers.

Troy Lanigan and Mark Milke founded SecondStreet.org in 2019 to complement the work of peer organizations. While macro research and statistics are important, large figures are often hard to conceptualize and are easily forgotten.

By using storytelling as a vehicle to discuss public policy issues, SecondStreet.org's content demonstrates – for better or worse – how government policies affect everyday people. Most importantly, the stories told by the think tank are easy for the public to remember.



Vision

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

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

2025 at a glance

10

10 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.

73

73 original videos

on a wide range of topics, including our hit documentary *The Greater Good*, documentaries on health care in Japan and Lithuania, various short health care stories, education reform clips and more.

12.1

12.1 million impressions

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

8.3

8.3 million video views

online - higher than ever before.

23

23 columns published

by major media outlets more than 40 times.

96

96 television and radio

interviews across Canada to discuss SecondStreet.org research.



SecondStreet.org's Colin Craig walks the streets of Osaka, Japan while learning about their health care system.

Sample of News Highlights 2025



“The folks at SecondStreet.org have been crunching the numbers once again, doing terrific research in that organization.”
 - Marc Patrone, **Sauga 960 AM**

“SecondStreet.org ... They do get the government data, and they give you a better picture of what's actually going on in areas of health care.”
 - Alex Pierson, **640 AM Toronto**

See more of SecondStreet.org's media coverage at:

secondstreet.org/in-the-news

Financials

Revenues	2024	2025**	2026*
• Donations	\$1,143,382	\$1,170,962	\$1,660,000
• Other	\$34,875	\$29,059	\$40,000
Total	\$1,178,257	\$1,200,021	\$1,700,000
Expenses	2024	2025**	2026*
• Salaries, benefits, and subcontractors	\$710,356	\$762,358	\$895,750
• Research, videos, and equipment	\$204,991	\$127,114	\$162,550
• Advertising	\$86,165	\$74,292	\$100,000
• Bank charges	\$4,488	\$4,259	\$5,000
• Other	\$142,373	\$219,204	\$243,500
• Growth Project	-	-	279,480
Total	\$1,148,373	\$1,187,227	\$1,686,280
Surplus / deficit	\$29,884	\$12,794	\$13,720

Note: Numbers may not add up due to rounding. * 2026 Budget, ** 2025 Audited.



SecondStreet.org staff at a government-run Tim Hortons at the Windsor Regional Hospital that has lost over \$3 million.



SecondStreet.org holds a press conference in Winnipeg with Debbie Fewster's family.

ISSUE PROFILE:

Health Reform

Canada's health care system is in crisis. Too many patients are dying on waiting lists or suffering while they wait for treatment. Millions can't even find a family doctor.

This is why health reform is SecondStreet.org's top priority.

Without a doubt, there are lots of good people working hard to help patients every day and there are some bright spots in the system. We try to shine a light on what's working well so that other provinces can copy positive reforms. But overall, too many patients are not receiving acceptable care.

In 2025, for instance, SecondStreet.org calculated that nearly 24,000 patients died on a waiting list the previous year. As damning as this number is, it's just a cold statistic. To demonstrate this problem in a meaningful way, we brought to light Manitoba patient Debbie Fewster's tragic story. The mother of three and grandmother to ten was told she needed heart surgery within three weeks. Debbie lasted over two months on a waiting list, but never received a date for surgery. She died after Thanksgiving dinner.

Stories like Debbie's help Canadians understand the problem. We paired her story with a unique policy solution: require health providers to notify patients of their estimated wait and their maximum recommended wait time. This helps patients know if the system is putting their life at risk and if they should consider pursuing treatment abroad. Politicians in Manitoba and B.C. later tabled legislation that would implement such a change.

While "Debbie's Law" would help, broader systemic reform is needed to improve the services provided to patients. SecondStreet.org regularly points to other nations with universal public systems that are providing better services and copy what they're doing right. We often point to Europe as a place to learn from, and have even created documentaries on the French and Swedish systems, this past year SecondStreet.org travelled to Japan to examine their system.

Unlike Canada, the Japanese system welcomes providers to open up new facilities – non-profit, for-profit and government facilities – and will then pay them if they provide treatment to patients. The government posts its reimbursement rates for each health service so there is a transparent and level playing field. This leads to competition and innovation, ultimately improving customer service and reducing wait times. We were told repeatedly that they can get patients in for treatment within days or a couple weeks. The Japanese model also helps ensure funding is spent on services for patients rather than bureaucracy. Our documentary on Japan's system has earned more than 1 million views, helping to inform the public of reform options that could work in Canada.

As noted, we also point to success stories in Canada. In 2025, SecondStreet.org released a report on Google Review scores for 83 major hospitals across Canada. This helps identify facilities that patients are pleased with and those that are struggling to provide quality treatment. SecondStreet.org is planning on examining some of the top ranked hospitals in the country to identify lessons that can be shared with their peers.



SecondStreet.org and Debbie Fewster's family at the Manitoba Legislature after the first draft of Debbie's Law was tabled.



A sign in rural Manitoba shows support for Debbie's Law.

ISSUE PROFILE:

Education

55% of Canadians believe the government's K-12 education system has gone in the wrong direction over the past 20 years.

This is a damning finding.

The old cliché is right – “children are our future.” It's vitally important for any nation to ensure the next generation has the skills and knowledge to compete and earn a living upon entering adulthood. But too often we hear stories of children who can't read or do relatively simple math equations. For example, recent test scores out of Ontario show half of the province's Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial standard in math.

At the same time, there's growing concern in Canada with how schools are operating – whether it's teachers bringing their political views into the classroom or some of the more controversial content that's being taught.

One solution SecondStreet.org highlighted in 2025 was Alberta's charter school model. Charter schools are funded with tax dollars and teach the provincial curriculum, but they're run by non-profits. Like public schools, they don't charge tuition. Charter schools often specialize in ways that distinguish them from public schools. For instance, STEM Innovation Academy in Calgary focuses on science, technology, engineering and math, while Calgary Classical Academy focuses on teaching the classics — classical literature, Latin, history and so forth. Both of these schools also have more stringent policies when it comes to discipline.

2025 SecondStreet.org research found that students in Alberta's charter schools, on average, achieved test scores that were almost an entire grade higher than their peers during the 2022-2024 period.

SecondStreet.org has been spending more time on education reform over the past while – listening to Canadians, parents, talking with those in the education sector. We're working on identifying policy solutions that help give parents more education options while also identifying policies that could improve the public school system.



SecondStreet.org Outreach Director Paula Iturri interviews a parent concerned about the state of the K-12 public school system.



Ontario mom Shannon Nicholson shared her thoughts on the problems with K-12 education in a SecondStreet.org interview.

ISSUE PROFILE:

Affordability

Canadians' top concern right now is affordability – poll after poll shows that finding. From rising grocery bills to the high cost of housing, it's easy to understand why Canadians are frustrated. Paycheques don't go as far as they once did.

Responding to these problems requires thoughtful policy options. Some have called for higher taxes and new government programs. But we know that approach doesn't work. SecondStreet.org will be spending more time this year, and in future years, identifying government policies that could be changed to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Should we change government rules to create more competition in the cell phone and airline transportation sectors? What about introducing true competition in Canada's dairy sector? These are the types of ideas we'll be exploring at a deeper level.

ON SECOND STREET: OUR NATIONAL CABLE TV SHOW

In 2023, SecondStreet.org launched a new public affairs cable 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.

We use the TV show to not only discuss our own research, but also the important work that peer organizations are working on. The TV show is also a platform to discuss other emerging public policy issues. In 2025, we covered health care reform extensively, allowing for deep discussions about reform options to move our system forward.

We also discussed problems with the education system and reform options as well as Canada's rising antisemitism problem, criminal justice reform and ways to reduce wasteful spending in government to name a few. (Visit [TheNewsForum.ca](https://www.thenewsforum.ca) to learn more about how you can tune in!)



SecondStreet.org discussed criminal justice reform with Peter Copeland from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and Scott Newark, a former Crown Prosecutor



SecondStreet.org's Research Director Bacchus Barua discusses his latest report on K-12 test scores in Alberta.



SecondStreet.org invited the Montreal Economic Institute and C.D. Howe Institute onto our show to discuss health reform in Canada.



Influencing Policy Decisions

We're driven by one thing: to see governments implement the constructive policy ideas we put forward.

There's no point churning out great reports, columns and videos if governments aren't paying attention. SecondStreet.org makes a concerted effort to reach out politicians across the spectrum and make sure they're aware of our research and policy ideas.

We're proud to report that governments are listening and making changes:

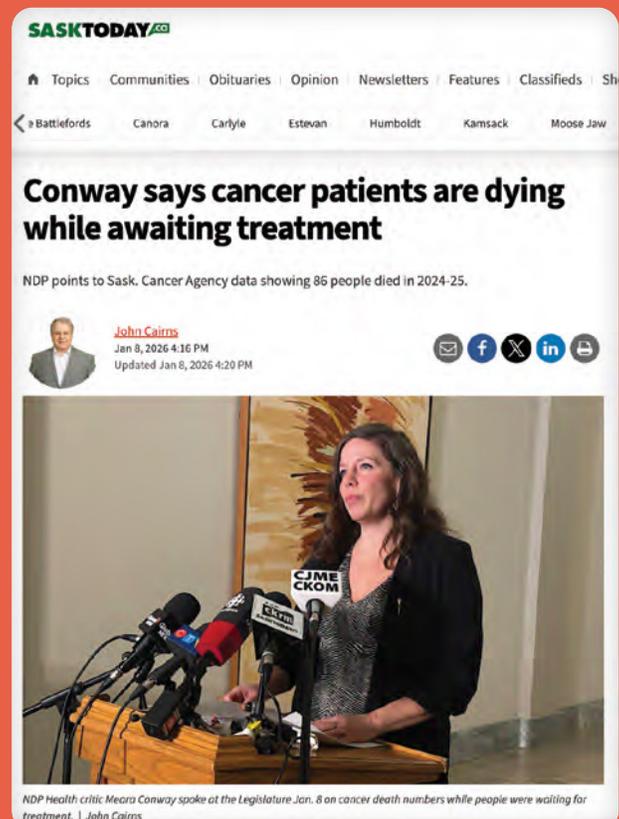
Choice in health care: Since SecondStreet.org launched in 2019, we've produced countless videos, columns and reports that note Canadians would benefit if we had more choice in health care: keep the public system, but allow patients to pay for treatment at local non-government clinics. The video stories we've shared on this topic have reached millions of Canadians, including politicians.

Thankfully, in 2025, the Alberta government announced it would take steps to grant Albertans this option. This is important as it will increase access to treatment and take pressure off the public system each time someone decides to pay for care. There's more work to do on this issue, but this announcement was a win!

Activity-based funding: Peer groups have suggested for years that governments should fund hospitals based on the volume of patients they help (and the complexity of care provided) rather than providing health facilities with an annual cheque each year. We agree, and have amplified this message with our own research, short videos, documentaries, columns, interviews, and, importantly, through meeting with politicians. This work has paid off. The Alberta government committed to such a change in 2025 and the B.C. Conservatives embraced this idea in their election platform.

Debbie's Law: In 2025, politicians in Manitoba and British Columbia tabled private member's bills to implement a unique idea put forward by SecondStreet.org: "Debbie's Law". The law would require health providers to inform patients, who are waiting for lifesaving treatment, their expected wait time and the maximum recommended wait time for their case. This would inform patients if the government was putting their life at risk on a long waiting list or not, allowing some to pursue private treatment outside the province.

More Work to Do: These are just a few examples of ways SecondStreet.org is influencing government decisions for the better. Needless to say, there's more work to do, but we're proud of the contributions we've made so far.



A Conservative politician in Alberta and an NDP politician in Saskatchewan both cited SecondStreet.org's health care research in the same week.

Our Team

Our Staff & Contributors



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Founder & CEO



Colin Craig
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Melanie Harvie
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Heidi McKillop
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Our Board



C.C. (Kip) Woodward
Board Chair



Scott Hennig
Director



Tracy Johnson
Director



Steven Muchnik
Director



Walter Robinson
Director



Jamil Ahmad
Director

Special Projects

PatientOptions.ca A new site to help patients

Many Canadians cannot afford to wait years for surgery while governments get around to improving the system with health reform. They need care now.

That's why SecondStreet.org created PatientOptions.ca – a new site that helps provide patients with two things:

1. Helpful tips on accessing health care in Canada's public system
2. Helpful information on how to access private health care in Canada and abroad

On the public side, patients can learn about important questions to ask if they find themselves on long waiting lists to see a specialist or to receive surgery. For example, are there specialists in the province – located in other cities – that can see you sooner? Can you be put on a cancellation waiting list? And more.

On the private side, PatientOptions.ca has put together a directory of private health providers in Canada – from MRI clinics to somewhere you could pay for knee surgery and everything in between.

The private side also helps Canadians answer questions about seeking private health care – which expenses can you write off on your taxes? Are there institutions that provide financial loans for surgery? Can anyone help you if you decide to go abroad for surgery? And more!

After using the site, 79-year-old Alberta patient Marcel Latouche noted:

"I heard about PatientOptions.ca, looked at the site and found it to be incredibly helpful when I decided to explore private surgery."

SchoolOptions.ca A new site to help parents

Research by SecondStreet.org shows that 55% of Canadians feel the public K-12 system has gone in the wrong direction in the last 20 years. Many parents are frustrated and are looking for answers now – they don't have time for education reform to take hold.

That's why SecondStreet.org created SchoolOptions.ca – a new site that helps provide parents with two things:

1. Helpful tips on accessing K-12 in Canada's public system
2. Helpful information on independent schools and homeschooling in Canada

On the public side, parents can learn helpful information about the public K-12 system. The site is especially helpful for parents who have moved to a new province and are unaware of what the options are for their children. For example, can parents send their child to any public school or does it have to be the school closest to their home?

The site also has helpful questions for parents to consider asking when meeting with both public and independent schools. For example, what is the school's approach to discipline? What kinds of consequences do children face for acting out?

On the private side, SchoolOptions.ca has put together information on government support available to parents (by province) and information on the tax status of tuition fees. Parents can also find helpful links for those wanting to pursue homeschooling.

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 policies that can **make life more affordable** for Canadians. In particular, we are going to examine policies that increase competition and use market forces to reduce costs for Canadian consumers.

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 eighth 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

Or donate online at: www.secondstreet.org/donate



SecondStreet.org's Research Director Bacchus Barua has several exciting research projects underway for 2026, including content related to health care and education.



SecondStreet.org's Dom Lucyk reacts after watching a hip operation as part of a short documentary on a Winnipeg patient's journey to Kaunas, Lithuania for surgery.

