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***Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada***  
***Ontario and Nunavut Division***  
**Pre-Budget Submission**  
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Canada has one of the highest rates of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in the world with Ontario home to the highest number of patients of any province. Research has shown that this disease “places a huge economic burden on healthcare models and societies due to productivity losses and caregiver burden”<sup>1</sup> with annual costs per patient exceeding \$62,000.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this economic burden is disproportionately born by women, who are three times more likely to be diagnosed with MS than men, and by people who are in the prime working years of their lives because MS is most often diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 49.

MS impacts all Ontarians not just the people who live with MS – their family, their friends, and their community are all touched by this disease. The unpredictable, episodic, yet progressive nature of MS makes it particularly challenging. MS is a chronic, often disabling, condition that impacts the central nervous system. It is a disability which has both visible and invisible symptoms, and barriers to timely access to treatment and care add immense financial and practical challenges for Ontario families who struggle with MS.

A diagnosis creates a major disruption and individuals often need to be absent from work on a periodic basis due to the episodic nature of MS. Knowing this, the government must take action to ensure that those who are able to continue working have timely and affordable access to the treatments and care they require. But we know this isn’t always the case. The MS Society of Canada has heard from the MS community around the province who tell us that the fragmented nature of MS care in Ontario leads to worse health outcomes and, in turn, a decreased ability for people who live with MS to contribute to their communities and our economy. We need the Government of Ontario to step up and address this challenge.

### **Key Ask**

- Introduce a ‘wrap-around-care’ model for MS clinics that provides direct funding to the clinics to enhance the ability for MS patients to access the multi-disciplinary care they require in a convenient, easy to access and navigate setting.

By enabling MS clinics to be funded directly rather than out of general operating budgets for hospitals your government will improve MS care for the people of Ontario who live with this disease and simultaneously increase their ability to stay in the workforce and contributing to their communities and our economy.

The MS Society of Canada knows that your government has done important work to ensure that those who live with MS have continued to receive the support they need in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we turn our attention to the recovery, we call on you to take action to ensure that the MS community can be an important part of driving our economic recovery by ensuring the MS clinics in Ontario have dedicated funding to provide the care MS patients need.

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<sup>1</sup>Paz-Zulueta, M., et al. (2020). "A literature review of cost-of-illness studies on the economic burden of multiple sclerosis."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.