



RETHINK BREAST CANCER APPLAUDS THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO FAST-TRACKING APPROVALS OF NEW, INNOVATIVE CANCER TREATMENTS

*Pilot program will bring people with breast cancer one step closer to Breaking Through the Bullsh*t*

TORONTO, ONTARIO, May 15, 2025 – Rethink Breast Cancer applauds the Ontario Government's announcement of a new pilot program to fast-track approvals of new, innovative cancer treatments so patients in Ontario get the drugs they need faster. The pilot will include "select high priority cancer drugs" that are Health Canada approved and part of Project Orbis, an international partnership designed to co-ordinate efforts between countries and give cancer patients faster access to promising treatments.

Canada has a long, complicated and duplicating drug approval process that results in access delays for Canadian cancer patients compared to other countries. While Health Canada can fast-track priority-reviews for breakthrough cancer therapies through Project Orbis, these innovative treatments go through the same first-in-first-out process Canada's Drug Agency and the pan Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA).

As a result, it takes far too long for the treatments to get to the patients whose lives depend on them. On average the Canadian process takes 926 days compared to the median of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries average of 519 days, ranking Canada 18th out of 20 OECD countries.

"One of the most gut-wrenching parts of our work is taking a call from someone who is desperate to access a new treatment, but it is out of reach because of administrative delays," said MJ DeCoteau, executive director and founder of Rethink Breast Cancer. "Alongside the work of many others in the cancer space, the Government of Ontario heard our call to Break Through the Bullsh*t. This is a huge step forward and we hope other provinces follow so patients across the country can access the treatments they need faster."

Breaking Through the Bullsh*t

In October 2023, Rethink asked the breast cancer community to share all the 'BS' they have had to deal with since their diagnosis and there was a lot – delays in diagnosis, poor reconstruction results, and issues with psychosocial support. However, what stood out were the challenges too many women with breast cancer face when trying to access breakthrough breast cancer treatments.

In November 2023, Rethink launched a community advocacy campaign – Break Through the Bullsh*t – calling on provincial governments to help champion:

1. The development of a clear process to prioritize breakthrough drugs beyond Health Canada
2. Expedite the independence of the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA)

A highlight of the campaign was an advocacy day at the Ontario Legislature where over 30 community members sat in Question Period and then joined Rethink to host a luncheon attended by more than 110 MPPs and staffers.

Rethink built on the campaign momentum by hosting a Letter Writing Brunch with Breasties on World Cancer Day that was attended by over 40 community members. This advocacy-focused event brought people with breast cancer and allies together to write letters to the Ontario Minister of Health and MPPs to share concerns about the delays in drug access and request their support. Together over 50 letters were sent to decision makers.

About Rethink Breast Cancer

Rethink Breast Cancer is a Canadian charity known for making positive change and rethinking the status quo when it comes to breast cancer. Rethink educates, empowers and advocates for system changes to improve the experience and outcomes of those with breast cancer, focusing on historically underserved groups: women diagnosed at a younger age, those with metastatic breast cancer and people systemically marginalized due to race, income or other factors. We uplift, inspire and most importantly, rethink breast cancer to help people live better and live longer. www.RethinkBreastCancer.com

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