



# Ontario FAST Program: A Medical Oncologist's Perspective on Accelerating Cancer Drug Access

An exploration of how Ontario is pioneering faster public funding for breakthrough cancer drugs – what's working, what needs to change, and how we can build a better system for every patient.

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# Introduction to the Cancer Clinician Advocacy Forum (CCAF)



CCAF is a pan-Canadian network of cancer clinicians, including nurses, pharmacists, and physicians, established in response to challenges that they face in delivering optimal cancer care for patients



CCAF operates under a Terms of Reference that defines the roles and responsibilities of its members, Steering Committee, and Co-Chairs



CCAF Its key priority areas are to:

1. Expand access to diagnostic testing, including molecular genetics testing
2. Ensure faster, more equitable access to new cancer therapies
3. Improve efficiencies in patient care and address human resource constraints

# The Urgent Need for Faster Cancer Drug Access in Ontario

**Current Reality:** wait ~ **2 full years** for publicly funded access to new cancer drugs. Every month of delay represents lost opportunity for disease control and improved survival.

**Traditional funding pathways** : sequential layers of regulatory review, health technology assessment, pan-Canadian price negotiations, and provincial listing decisions. **Bottlenecks, delays.**

~2yrs

Average Wait

From drug approval to public funding in Canada

12mo

Longer Than Peers

Compared to other developed countries

# FAST Program: Funding Accelerated for Specific Treatments

In October 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Health launched the **FAST Program** – a bold 3-year pilot initiative designed to dramatically shorten the time patients wait for publicly funded access to breakthrough cancer drugs.

1

## Targeted Acceleration

Fast-tracks public funding for **7–10 high-priority cancer drugs** each year, focusing on therapies with the greatest potential to change patient outcomes.

2

## Project Orbis Alignment

Prioritizes drugs approved through **Project Orbis**, an international regulatory collaboration that enables simultaneous review across multiple countries.

3

## Months Saved

Enables patients to access treatments **9–12 months earlier** than under the traditional sequential funding pathway.

4

## Pilot Evaluation

The 3-year pilot structure allows for rigorous assessment of outcomes, costs, and system impacts before permanent adoption.

# Breakthrough Cancer Drugs Fast-Tracked So Far

The FAST Program has already delivered tangible results. The following drugs are now publicly funded in Ontario **without waiting for lengthy price negotiations** to conclude – a paradigm shift in how cancer medicines reach patients.



## TAGRISO (Osimertinib)

1st, 2nd line EGFRm  
and adjuvant



## SCEMBLIX (Asciminib)

A novel STAMP inhibitor  
for **chronic myeloid  
leukemia**



## NUBEQA (Darolutamide)

Androgen receptor  
inhibitor for **prostate  
cancer**, earlier lines



## CALQUENCE (Acalabrutinib)

BTK inhibitor for **mantle  
cell lymphoma/CLL**



## OPDIVO + YERVOY Combination (Nivolumab plus ipilimumab)

1st line met **liver** cancer  
and MSI high **colorectal**  
cancer



# Patient Impact: What Earlier Access Means in Practice

## Real-World Example

Consider a lung cancer patient with an EGFR mutation.

Earlier treatment to PREVENT or DELAY incurable metastases

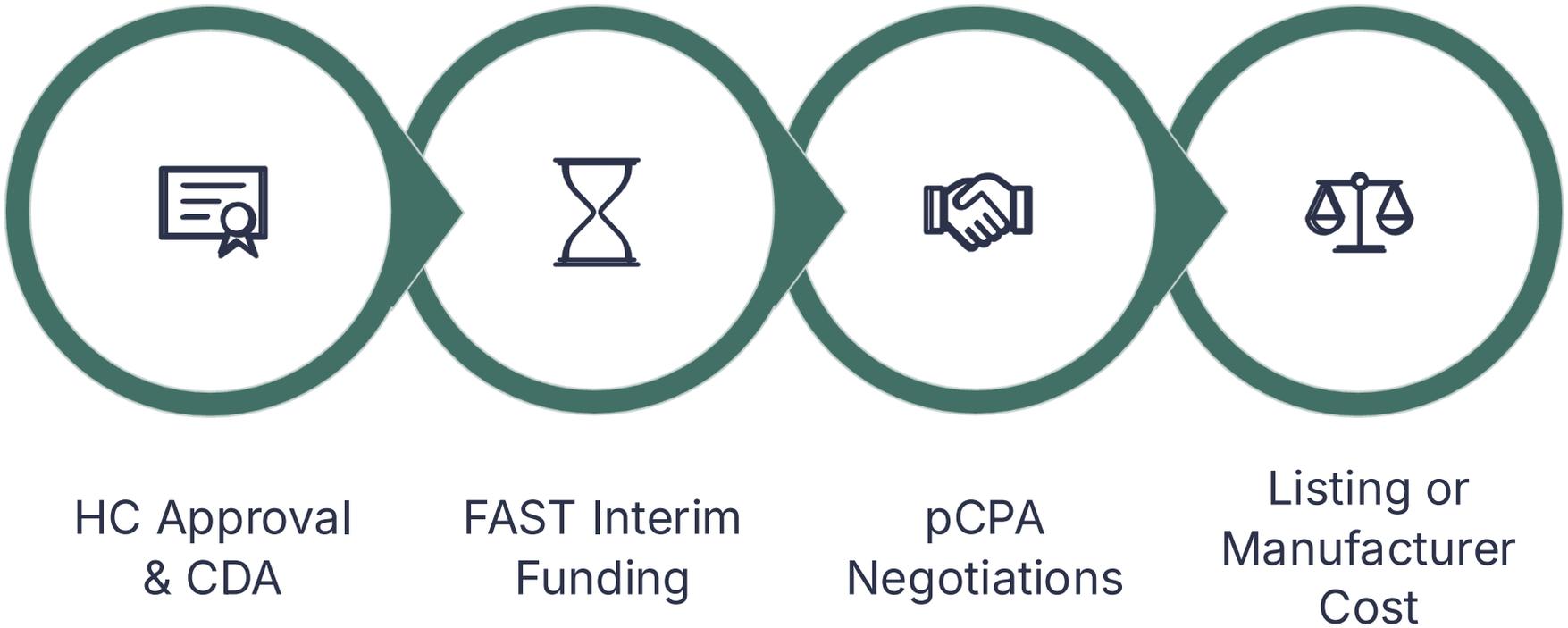
Earlier treatment for advanced disease, longer benefit and delay to more toxic chemotherapy

## Broader Benefits for Patients and Clinicians

- **Reduced anxiety and uncertainty** for clinicians, patients and families
- **Improved equity**
- **Empowered oncologists** to offer best-in-class, evidence-aligned treatments without delay
- **Better clinical outcomes** when optimal therapy starts at the right time
- **Societal benefits**

# How the FAST Program Works: Streamlining Complex Processes

The FAST Program restructures the traditional sequential funding pathway by introducing an **interim funding period** that allows patients to access drugs while price negotiations are still underway.



A critical safeguard is built into the program: if pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA) negotiations ultimately fail, **manufacturers are required to cover treatment costs** for patients who have already started therapy. The Ministry of Health individually assesses each drug's suitability for FAST, and complex therapies like CAR-T cell treatments are currently excluded from the pilot due to their unique delivery and cost structures.

# Impact of pCPA's ENP on the FAST Program

## JULY 2024

As Chair of Council of the Federation, Ontario Premier Doug Ford calls for faster access to new medicines



## MAY 2025

Premier Ford commits to move forward independently with Ontario's own 3-yr pilot to fast-track access to oncology meds

## OCTOBER 2025

Ontario launched the FAST program



## DECEMBER 2024

Council of the Federation commits to an early accelerated access program (cancer medicines only)



## OCTOBER 2025

pCPA announced that it would launch two new expedited negotiation pathways including the Early Negotiated Process (ENP)

### THE GLOBE AND MAIL

pCPA CEO Mauro Chies was quoted in a Globe and Mail article as stating that if the ENP works as planned, it could eliminate the need for Ontario's interim workaround

## DECEMBER 2025

pCPA launched the ENP



The ENP is intended to reduce negotiation timeframes by several months through starting the negotiation process before a final health technology assessment reimbursement recommendation has been issued. The intention is to have negotiations completed by the time a final reimbursement recommendation is published.

## INSIGHTS

- Unclear if pCPA created ENP in response to Ontario's FAST program OR was already developing it
- The two programs are operating in parallel
- The key difference is that the FAST program facilitates reimbursement in advance of a pCPA LOI (with the caveat that the innovator will reimburse the province if a LOI is not achieved at pCPA)



# Strengths of the FAST Program



**Dramatically Reduced Wait Times**



**Global Best Practices Alignment**



**Patient-Centred Care**



**Innovation Catalyst**

Encourages pharmaceutical investment in Ontario's life sciences sector by demonstrating a commitment to rapid, predictable market access.

# Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While the FAST Program represents a significant step forward, medical oncologists have identified several challenges that must be addressed to maximize its impact and sustainability.

## Limited Drug Eligibility

**Restricted to Project Orbis**, which means some promising therapies reviewed through standard pathways are excluded from accelerated funding

## Complex Therapies Excluded

**CAR-T cell therapy** and other complex biologics are not yet included

## Communication Gaps

Many oncologists and patients remain **unaware of program details**, eligibility criteria, and how to access fast-tracked drugs – clearer education and outreach are essential

## Sustainability Concerns

Balancing accelerated access with **cost-effectiveness and budget impact** remains a delicate challenge that requires transparent evaluation throughout the pilot period



# Opportunities to Broaden and Enhance FAST

## 1 Expand Eligibility

Include more **cancer types** and innovative therapies **beyond the Project Orbis** framework, capturing a wider range of breakthrough treatments for patients with unmet needs

## 2 Integrate Real-World Evidence

Systematically **collect real-world data** on patient outcomes, safety, and utilization to refine funding decisions and demonstrate value to policymakers

## 1 Pan-Canadian Collaboration

Foster partnerships with other **provinces** and international agencies to **harmonize** and share best practices

## 2 Feedback Loops

Develop structured patient and clinician feedback mechanisms to continuously improve the program experience and identify emerging barriers to access



# The Future Vision: Transforming Cancer Care Access in Ontario

1

## Provincial Model

FAST becomes a proven **template for other Canadian provinces** to adopt, creating a **nationwide acceleration framework** for cancer drug access

2

## Beyond Oncology

The accelerated funding model expands into other therapeutic areas – **rare diseases, ...**

3

## Digital Integration

Leveraging **digital health tools** to streamline approvals, enable remote patient monitoring, and automate data collection for real-time program evaluation

4

## Sustained Impact

Ongoing evaluation ensures long-term sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and continuous improvement – reducing disparities across all of Canada

# Summary: FAST Program's Promise and Path Forward

Ontario's FAST Program represents a **groundbreaking step** toward ensuring cancer patients receive timely access to the treatments they need. As medical oncologists, we have witnessed firsthand the difference that earlier drug access makes in patient outcomes and clinical decision-making.

## Proven Results

Six breakthrough drugs fast-tracked, with patients accessing therapy **9–12 months earlier** – demonstrating real system efficiencies and clinical benefits

## Clinician Advocacy

Medical oncologists play a **critical role** in advocating for program expansion, providing clinical expertise, and ensuring patient voices are heard in policy decisions

## Room to Grow

Broadening eligibility, integrating real-world evidence, and improving communication will strengthen the program's foundation for long-term success

## Shared Commitment

Together, clinicians, patients, and policymakers can ensure **all Canadians** receive the best cancer care – faster and more equitably than ever before

# Call to Action: Collaborate to Accelerate and Expand Access

The FAST Program has opened a door. Now it is up to all of us – clinicians, patients, policymakers, and industry partners – to walk through it together and build a cancer care system that leaves no patient behind.



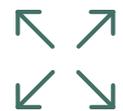
## Engage Stakeholders

Bring together clinicians, patients, advocacy groups, policymakers, and industry to shape the program's evolution with diverse perspectives and shared purpose



## Support Data-Driven Evaluation

Champion transparent communication of outcomes data and cost-effectiveness analyses to build public trust and inform evidence-based expansion decisions



## Advocate for Inclusion

Push for the inclusion of diverse therapies – including complex biologics and personalized medicine – and underserved patient populations within the program



## Lead Nationally

Help Ontario set the standard for Canada, demonstrating that accelerated access is achievable, sustainable, and transformative for cancer care delivery

**Together, we can ensure that no cancer patient in Ontario waits longer than necessary for the treatments that could save their life.**



# The Honest Truth

1

## Long Overdue

Issues well known for >20 years, inaction so far

2

## One Piece in the Puzzle

Late diagnoses (no GPs), delayed workups (no scanners), delayed assessments (no specialists), ...

3

## Cost

Not necessarily higher, but ++ more drugs coming

4

## National Issue

Other provinces: observer status