



“When Canadians are in good physical and mental health, they are able to work better, be more productive, and contribute more fully to our economy while living healthier, happier lives. Our health care system provides Canadians with peace of mind, but we need to make the investments necessary to ensure it can continue to evolve and innovate.”

from the Minister of Health
mandate letter by Justin Trudeau

Neuroscience research impacts all Canadians. One in three Canadians will be affected by a neurological disorder, injury or psychiatric disease in their lifetime. The costs of neurological diseases will continue to increase as life expectancy increases and the population ages. Innovative discovery research can help reverse these trends. The Canadian Association for Neuroscience wants to work with the Government of Canada to develop a long-term, **national strategy that would lead to a greater understanding of the healthy brain, and the treatment and prevention of brain disorders.**

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience represents scientists from across Canada who are dedicated to advancing brain research. Our association is composed of approximately one thousand researchers, who work at academic institutions across the country. Neuroscience has always been one of the greatest research and innovation strengths of Canada, and our researchers need, now more than ever, the support of our government to pursue the research that will keep Canadian brains healthy in the future.

The scientific community is grateful for the dedication of previous governments to invest in scientific research. In the early 2000s, Canadian science was strongly supported by three key initiatives of the previous Liberal government lead by Jean Chrétien. The creation of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and the Canada Research Chair (CRC) program invigorated biomedical research and attracted a large number of internationally recognized researchers to positions in Canada.

It is essential that the current government maintain its support for these crucial initiatives.

- A critical short-term goal is to increase the budget of the CIHR to restore key support for research laboratories across the country and prevent lab closures.
- In addition to restoring this important basic support for our researchers, we suggest to develop, as a long-term goal, a plan to support brain health in Canada. These schemes include support for the Tri-Council Agency, continued funds for Brain Canada, and close collaboration with charities invested in brain health. We believe the time is optimal to mount a large-scale initiative to address outstanding questions about how the healthy brain functions and how these processes are compromised in a diseased nervous system. Such knowledge is critical for the future prosperity and well-being of Canadians.

Background information:

Why neuroscience research is important

Over 1000 conditions can affect the brain and nervous system, including depression, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease, traumatic brain injury and multiple sclerosis. No cure, and too few effective treatments exist for the majority of these diseases and conditions.

Neurological disorders can affect anyone, irrespective of age, income or culture, and many have chronic consequences.

In addition to the emotional and personal burden on individuals affected and their families, Health Canada estimates that neurological and psychiatric conditions represent 14% of the total economic burden of disease in this country. This is more than cardiovascular disease or cancer.

Canadian neuroscientists

Canadian neuroscientists are leaders in their field, and are at the forefront of research trends. Their expertise is internationally renowned.

Many consider we are entering the Golden age of neuroscience: New technologies give researchers tools to study the brain like never before. The brain used to be opaque - new research approaches have made it transparent, allowing researchers to investigate the details of its functioning in health and disease. Integrative new research approaches make this one of the most exciting periods in neuroscience research.

The vast majority of what we know about the brain has been discovered in the last 20 years. Basic understanding of how neurons and the brain work is an integrative study and reveals that many diseases and conditions share common origins - For example, in both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, neurons die prematurely, which results in impaired brain function. It is likely that a cure for one condition will provide insight and treatments for others, given their similarities.

The work Canadian Neuroscientists do today will yield the treatments and cures of tomorrow.

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN)

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) is the largest association dedicated to neuroscience research in Canada.

The CAN membership, board members and newly formed advocacy committee include representatives from many geographical areas of Canada and individuals at different levels of career, including early-career, mid-career and senior investigators. We also bring together both basic and clinical researchers. CAN is highly motivated to share our knowledge about the way scientific research is conducted.

Effective health care will require investments to discover new treatments and cures for the neurological diseases and conditions that affect so many Canadians. CAN is here to support the efforts of the Canadian government to ensure our health care system evolves and innovates to meet the challenges of the coming decades.