

CAN-ACN Advocacy update – October 2021

The following report covers the advocacy activities of the Canadian Association for neuroscience from September 30, 2020 to October 1, 2021.

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience’s main objectives in the past months have been to

- engage directly with Members of Parliament, Senators and Parliament hill staff to promote increased investment in scientific research by the Canadian government
- promote neuroscience research in Canada to the public, to show its importance for all Canadians.

Contents

1. CAN Parliament Hill Week – November 2-6, 2020.....	2
2. Launch of the Canadian Science Discoveries Video Contest.....	2
3. CAN President Shernaz Bamji speaks at House of Commons Standing Committee on Health on June 14, 2021	2
4. CAN prepares an election engagement toolkit for the September 2021 federal election campaign	2
5. CAN and CSMB co-host “Science Policy and Government 101 with Member of Parliament Kirsty Duncan”	3
6. CAN call to action to support Motion M-38 to create a Standing Committee on Science and Research	3
7. CAN President Charles Bourque participates in the Canadian Science Policy Conference as panelist.....	4
8. CAN-ACN survey on impact of COVID-19 on researchers and laboratories in Canada	4
9. Participation in the Canadian Government’s pre-budget consultations.....	4
10. Promotion of basic and neuroscience research in national publications	5
11. Highlighting Brain Star Award Winners	5
12. New initiative: CAN Trainee video spotlight.....	6
13. CAN support for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in neuroscience	6
14. Promoting Canadian neuroscience success stories on our website & Social media accounts. 6	
15. Partnership development:.....	6
16. CAN lead the promotion of a statement in support of widespread COVID-19 vaccination	7
17. Canadian Brain Research Strategy	7



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

18. Development of guides and resources for Canadian Neuroadvocates.....	7
19. Supporting grass-roots advocacy initiatives in Canada.....	7

1. CAN Parliament Hill Week – November 2-6, 2020.

Key points:

- 27 meetings with key members of Parliament, Senator and Parliamentary staff
- Over 50 Canadian Neuroadvocates participated, including neuroscientists at all career levels and from across the country.
- Planned for November 2-6, 2020, with some meetings re-scheduled for later in November, beginning of December. Some follow up meetings were requested also by Members of Parliament in December.
- Hill week meeting organisation facilitated by Public Affairs firm Temple Scott Associates.

2. Launch of the Canadian Science Discoveries Video Contest

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience is proud to have launched in the Fall of 2021 a video contest to promote important Canadian science discoveries! The goal is to raise awareness of the importance of fundamental science by sharing Canadian science success stories. The contest is open to all. Details: <https://can-acn.org/canadian-science-discoveries-video-contest/>

3. CAN President Shernaz Bamji speaks at House of Commons Standing Committee on Health on June 14, 2021

The President of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience, Dr. Shernaz X. Bamji spoke to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health on June 14, 2021. She spoke on the importance of federal funding of basic discovery science in Canada.

A recording of her testimony is available on the CAN youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vrg1kxayUx8&t=5s>

A transcript of her testimony is available here:

<https://openparliament.ca/committees/health/43-2/44/dr-shernaz-bamji-1/>

4. CAN prepares an election engagement toolkit for the September 2021 federal election campaign

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) had several priorities this Federal Election, including:

- A commitment to provide a one-time 25% increase in investment in the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and

the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for research restart and recovery from the setback of the COVID-19 pandemic to research laboratories in Canada.

- A commitment to provide robust and predictable funding for basic discovery research to sustain and grow Canada's scientific community. Funding to the CIHR, the NSERC and the SSHRC should be increased by at least 10% yearly.
- A commitment to reinstate a dedicated Minister of Science, so that the unique needs of the scientific community may have a devoted seat at the Cabinet table.

As such, CAN prepared, with the support of Public Affairs firm Temple Scott Associates, an "Election Toolkit" for CAN Members looking to get engaged throughout the election which is available in the CAN Election Readiness Google Drive here: shorturl.at/dowzC.

We have also generated a document called "Science and Research Priorities" in which we have highlighted the main commitments made by each party related to science and research.

5. CAN and CSMB co-host "Science Policy and Government 101 with Member of Parliament Kirsty Duncan"

On Friday, June 25, 2021 at 1:00pm EST the Canadian Association for Neuroscience and the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences jointly hosted a session with the Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Ph.D., Member of Parliament for the riding of Etobicoke North and former Minister of Science for a Q&A session on Science Policy and Government.

This event, exclusive to members of CSMB and CAN gave participants the opportunity to ask Dr. Duncan questions about how best to engage with elected and non-elected officials, and how to amplify our message about the importance of supporting fundamental science.

6. CAN call to action to support Motion M-38 to create a Standing Committee on Science and Research

On April 27, 2021, member of Parliament Kirsty Duncan presented a motion to create a new House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research. This will provide Canadian scientist and researchers a dedicated voice in Parliament. This motion was up for debate and vote in May 2021

<https://openparliament.ca/debates/2021/4/27/kirsty-duncan-1/>

CAN invited all our members to reach out to their elected officials (Member of Parliament) to vote in favour of this motion.

We are happy to report that this motion received unanimous support from all political parties, with no opposing voice. We will be working with Temple Scott Associates, our public affairs firm to engage with this new committee. This is an excellent opportunity for Canadian scientists to have a voice on Parliament Hill, and we are extremely excited about this new opportunity.



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

7. CAN President Charles Bourque participates in the Canadian Science Policy Conference as panelist

Professor Charles Bourque participated in the virtual session: *Roles & Responsibilities of Academic Science Societies in informing Policy: Lessons & Observations from Around the World* on November 17th 2020 via zoom, as part of the Canadian Science Policy Conference. Other panel participants were

- **Imogen R. Coe** *President, Canadian Society of Molecular Biosciences*
- **Susan Amara** *President, American Association for the Advancement of Science*
- **Hilary Lappin-Scott** *President, Federation of European Microbiology Societies (FEMS)*
- **Shohini Ghose** *Past President, Canadian Association of Physicists*
- **Stephen B. Heard** *President, Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution*

The Canadian Science Policy Conference is the most important science advocacy event in Canada, and participation in this event is an opportunity for networking and sharing resources.

A recording of this event is available on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFF2APt8oDc>

8. CAN-ACN survey on impact of COVID-19 on researchers and laboratories in Canada

To quantify and qualify the impact COVID-19 has had on researchers and laboratories in Canada, CAN held a survey on its website on July 17-27, 2020. We shared this survey with other scientific associations and received responses from 700 Canadian researchers. The results of this survey were shared on our website, (<https://can-acn.org/covid-impact-survey/>) and used to inform our recommendations submitted to the government of Canada pre-budget consultations – view next section.

9. Participation in the Canadian Government's pre-budget consultations

In preparation for their 2021 and 2022 budgets, the Canadian government held consultations, and CAN submitted recommendations related to science funding. CAN also reached out to other scientific associations in Canada and to our members to share our recommendation and invite them to also submit recommendations in these consultations.

- August 2021 CAN Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finances <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/FINA/Brief/BR10973829/br-external/CanadianAssociationForNeuroscience-e.pdf>
- February 2021: CAN submission to Department of Finance pre-budget consultations <https://can-acn.org/docs/pre-budget-CAN-ACN.pdf>
- August 2022 CAN Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finances <https://can-acn.org/docs/CAN-FINA-consultations-pre-budget-2022.pdf>

In its report to the government for the 2021 budget, we are proud to report the Standing Committee on Finances included CAN's first recommendation:



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

Recommendation 14

Provide a one-time 25% increase in investment in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for research restart and recovery from the setback of the COVID-19 pandemic to research laboratories in Canada.

(<https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/FINA/report-1/page-33#2>)

Unfortunately, this recommendation was not included in budget 2021.

10. Promotion of basic and neuroscience research in national publications

Two members of the CAN advocacy committee, Drs. Liisa Galea and Lisa Saksida, published an Op-Ed in the Vancouver Sun on June 20, 2021:

Liisa Galea and Lisa Saksida: Fund science for a healthier and safer future

Opinion: Investment in research and innovation has huge implications for who will be most prepared for global crises, as we have learned from our decision to outsource vaccine production

View the full article here: <https://vancouver.sun.com/opinion/liisa-galea-and-lisa-saksida-fund-science-for-a-healthier-and-safer-future>

CAN has published sponsored content in the following major newspapers and magazines, to promote investment in basic research.

- Toronto Star, Saturday March 27, 2021
- Chatelaine – December 2020 issue
- MacLean's – October 2020 issue
- Online: <https://www.healthinsight.ca/advocacy/funding-research-is-the-key-to-understanding-neurological-conditions/>
- a video feature was produced to be shared on social media outlets in April, May and June. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6-XAYXpWz8>

11. Highlighting Brain Star Award Winners

CAN has developed a partnership with the Institutes of Neuroscience, Mental Health and Addiction of the Canadian Institutes of Health (CIHR-INMHA) to manage applications and peer-review of applications for the CAN-CIHR-INMHA Brain Star Awards, which recognize the 15 best publications by trainees working in laboratories in Canada in the fields covered by CIHR-INMHA. CAN adjudicated the 2020 competition (for articles published between Jan 1 and Dec 31, 2020) and produced features of all 15 winners on the CAN website. These features will be shared weekly on our social media accounts (#BrainStarAward) in July and August 2021 following a promotion plan developed by CAN and approved by CIHR-INMHA.



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

View the 15 profiles here: <https://can-acn.org/congratulations-to-the-winners-of-the-2020-can-cihr-inmha-brain-star-awards/>

The top 3 winners presented their research at the Canadian Neuroscience Meeting in August 2021.

We are happy to report that CAN has recently signed a new MoU with CIHR-INMHA to manage the applications, peer-review and publicity for the Brain Star Awards for the next 3 years. This partnership is a great way to feature Canadian neuroscience trainees and the important research they do.

12. New initiative: CAN Trainee video spotlight

CAN is proud to highlight the research of trainees in Canadian laboratories in the video series "CAN Research Spotlights". The objective of this series is to feature short presentation of recently published papers which may not have been featured otherwise in a press release, in a way that presents the trainee who performed the work, and that entices viewers to read the paper.

You can view the videos here: <https://can-acn.org/can-trainee-research-features/>

13. CAN support for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in neuroscience

The CAN advocacy committee works closely with the CAN Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee to promote to address important issues for our community. The CAN EDI committee is a very active one. CAN has published a [statement on racism, discrimination and violence](#), and an [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement](#) to promote principles of EDI. CAN has also collated a list of anti-racism resources, with a focus on resources that are most relevant to Canadian scientists, and published it here: <https://can-acn.org/anti-racism-resources/>

14. Promoting Canadian neuroscience success stories on our website & Social media accounts.

CAN regularly publishes neuroscience research discoveries made in Canada on our website and social media platforms. CAN is present on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and uses these platforms to disseminate the success stories of Canadian neuroscientists to a wide audience. These stories and other association news can be found in the CAN news section of our website: <https://can-acn.org/>

15. Partnership development:

CAN has partnered with organizations and associations to promote government investments in Science.

- Research Canada: Through our membership in Research Canada, CAN supports many meetings and initiatives that aim to promote investment in health research in Canada



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

- Partnership with other scientific associations in Canada: CAN has developed a list of Canadian science associations to share science advocacy initiatives. We have reached out to these partners to inform them of dates of pre-budget consultations, and to coordinate our requests. We have worked together with partners to develop pro-vaccine messaging.

16. CAN lead the promotion of a statement in support of widespread COVID-19 vaccination

CAN joined many other Canadian scientific associations to combat COVID-19 vaccine misinformation and promote widespread vaccination. CAN developed the website **canadiansciencesocieties.ca** and reached out to societies for the endorsement of the following message:

“Canada’s scientists welcome and support widespread COVID-19 vaccination”

<https://canadiansciencesocieties.ca/>

17. Canadian Brain Research Strategy

The CAN President and Chief Operating Officer CAN have participated in strategic meetings with the leaders of the Canadian Brain Research Strategy. The CBRS recently received financial support from the Canadian government. Learn more about the strategy here: <https://canadianbrain.ca/about/>

Following discussions with the CBRS leadership team, it has been agreed that CAN representatives will participate in the CBRS steering committee meetings.

18. Development of guides and resources for Canadian Neuroadvocates

CAN has developed some guides and resources for Canadian neuroadvocates, which include statistics about research funding and support in Canada. Many resources were developed and shared on the CAN website in preparation for CAN Hill Week and with the Parliamentarians we met. Multiple resources were translated to French. These resources are available on our website: (<https://can-acn.org/advocacy/>)

19. Supporting grass-roots advocacy initiatives in Canada.

In January 2021, CAN launched a sponsorship program competition for neuroscience outreach and advocacy activities across Canada - to engage at the local level, and to promote junior neuroadvocates in their mission to inform the public. These sponsorships aim to support the important work trainees do to promote and showcase neuroscience research and education. Applications are accepted and reviewed every three months (March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1) and awards will be given based on adherence to award criteria and be contingent on budget availability.

CAN's advocacy efforts are greatly supported by the public affairs firm Temple Scott and Associates, and we have renewed our contract with them for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Thank you for reading our report!