



**CAN-ACN**

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

Report on Advocacy Activities  
May 2017 to date

&

2017 – 2018 Advocacy Action Plan

# Canadian Association for Neuroscience 2017 Advocacy Activities & Plans for 2018

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## Message from Drs. Lynn Raymond and Katalin Toth

Dear Mr. Heintz,

We are pleased to present you an interim report on our advocacy activities since our last report, in May 2017. The full report submitted to you in May 2017 is available at <http://can-acn.org/documents/2017/CAN-Final-Advocacy-Report-SfN-2016-2017-FINAL-2.pdf>). The present report highlights the progress we have made since then towards meeting our advocacy goals and reaching the objectives outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding we have with SfN.

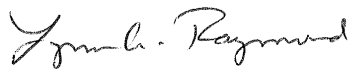
In the first part of this report, we highlight advocacy events that were held at our annual meeting, and their general impact and reception.

In the second part, we focus on the advocacy committee's current priorities, which have been influenced by the recent publication (in April 2017) of Canada's Fundamental Science Review, commissioned by Canada's Minister of Science, the Honorable Kirsty Duncan.

Finally, in the last part of this report, we present our plans for advocacy for the upcoming months.

If you have any questions or would like to talk with us directly, please feel free to contact us at your convenience.

With regards,



Lynn Raymond, President



Katalin Toth, Advocacy Committee  
Chair

## 2017 CAN Advocacy Committee

Chair:

**Katalin Toth**, Université Laval

Members:

**Charles Bourque**, McGill University

**Liisa Galea**, U of British Columbia

**Kurt Haas**, U of British Columbia

**Michael Hendricks**, McGill University

**David Kaplan**, U of Toronto

**Beverley Orser**, U of Toronto

**Doug Zochodne**, U of Alberta

**Anastassia Voronova**, U of Toronto Liaison to [CSMB](#)

Administrative Support:

**Jason Tetro**, Advocacy Officer

**Julie Poupart**, Chief Operating Officer

Updates to the advocacy committee: Jay Ingram, Jean-Claude Béique and Jaideep Bains have been replaced by Charles Bourque, Liisa Galea and Kurt Haas. Ingram has resigned, while Béique and Bains have been elected to the CAN Board of Directors, and have therefore chosen to be replaced.

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience held its 11<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Montreal, from May 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>. Many outreach and advocacy events took place at the CAN2017 meeting, briefly outlined here.

## Public outreach events – May 27<sup>th</sup> 2017:

### Public lecture:

**Sonia Lupien**, PhD, Founder and Director of the Centre for Studies on Human Stress, (picture, with Richard Robitaille, Chair of the CAN meeting local organizing committee) gave a highly entertaining public lecture on the subject of stress to a very interested crowd at the auditorium of the Grande Bibliothèque, a public venue in downtown Montreal. This event was a great opportunity to show how research on the neuroscience of stress can have real-life impact.



### Distribution of the CAN book:

Printed copies of *Canadian Connections – Highlighting Recent Neuroscience Research* (available in PDF format here: <http://can-acn.org/documents/2017/CAN-Connection-Book-web.pdf>) were distributed to public lecture attendees, which helped highlight the breadth of Canadian neuroscience research to an interested crowd.



### Advertisement of the CAN Public lectures in Major newspapers in Montreal.

CAN paid for advertisement of the CAN Public lecture and associated Convergence Art exhibit in two major Montreal newspapers: La Presse and Le Devoir. These advertisements increased the visibility of our events with the general public.

## Art & Neuroscience at CAN2017

### Convergence Initiative – a Canadian Art & Neuroscience event

CAN was proud to support the **Convergence initiative**, a very active collaboration between student artists from Concordia University and neuroscience trainees from McGill

University. A series of event, which included lab visits by artists, workshop visits by neuroscientists, gallery tours and a presentation series, open to the public, led to the creation of truly unique art pieces.

The initiative was led by Cristian Zaelzer, a neuroscience graduate student at McGill University and culminated in an exhibit at the CAN public lectures, on May 27th.



The Convergence Exhibit was a great opportunity for members of the public to meet the neuroscientists and artists who worked together to produce the art pieces. The attendees had a chance to discuss the neuroscience research that inspired the art, in an informal and engaging way.

More pictures of this event can be found here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/can-acn/albums/72157681755021052>



### **Neurocraft | Manitoba Craft Council & Manitoba Neuroscience Network**

Finally, we were proud to welcome Neurocraft, a collaboration between the Manitoba Craft Council and the Manitoba Neuroscience Network, who exhibited at the meeting and held a full exhibit at a local art gallery in Montreal, the Visual Voice Gallery, during the meeting. CAN attendees were invited to a special opening reception at the gallery.

### **Interstellate sponsorship**

At the CAN meeting, CAN also sponsored the publication and distribution of the Interstellate magazine, curated by Caitlin Vander Weele. This magazine, which features neuroscience images that also have artistic value, is an engaging way to present research to the general public.

Interstellate magazines were distributed at the CAN public lectures and at the CAN2017 meeting, during the opening reception.

## Advocacy Events at CAN2017

### **CAN Advocacy session**

For the second year, CAN held an advocacy session at the CAN annual meeting. This session served in partial fulfillment of one of the objectives of the CAN-SfN MOU, the development of an advocacy workshop.

#### **Presentation by lobbyist Michelle McLean**

Following the recommendation from our partners at Research Canada, CAN invited lobbyist **Michelle McLean**, Vice-President of Public Affairs, Hill+Knowlton strategies, to present her perspectives and insights on the best way to approach the government of Canada to ensure the recommendations of **Canada's review of fundamental science** (also known as the Naylor report) are implemented.

The presentation was an eye-opener for the neuroscientists in attendance, as it explained how policy proposals get noticed by government officials, which ones have a better chance of being implemented, and some of the strategies that need to be adopted for a successful appeal to the government. Michelle McLean has extensive experience working with science and non-profit organisation to lobby for their interests, and her presentation presented our members with an overview of how to do this effectively.

Following this presentation, the CAN Advocacy committee has pursued discussion with Michelle McLean to determine if we could hire her team to work with CAN on the important issue of the Naylor report implementation. CAN has reached out to other science organisations in Canada to share costs. Discussions are ongoing. We hope to work with McLean's team to develop advocacy training protocols adapted to the reality of the Canadian parliamentary system.



## **Presentation of 2017 CAN Advocacy Awards**

The Advocacy Committee of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience was proud to give prizes of \$1000 and a plaque to the 2017 CAN Advocacy and Outreach Prize winners.

### *First prize – Best local SfN Chapter - Manitoba Neuroscience Network*

The committee was impressed by the group’s dynamism, the breadth of the activities they have organised, and their outreach to the general public, including youth and the francophone community. Highlights of their activities can be seen here: <http://can-acn.org/manitoba-neuroscience-network-wins-2017-can-advocacy-award-for-best-sfn-chapter-group>

### *First prize – Best individual initiative - Midori Nediger for the POND 3D brain project*

Midori Nediger developed an online interactive brain model to improve public understanding of neurodevelopmental disorders, with support from the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders (POND) Network, called POND 3D brain. Learn more about Midori Nediger and her project here: <http://can-acn.org/midori-nediger-wins-can-2017-advocacy-award-individual-category>

Picture below (left to right): CAN President Freda Miller, Manitoba Neuroscience Network leader Sari Hannila, Midori Nediger, POND 3D Brain project, and Katalin Toth, Chair of the CAN Advocacy Committee at CAN2017



### **Advocacy travel awards**

The presentations by the winners and award ceremony were well attended and very much appreciated by the trainees who are the driving force for many advocacy and outreach initiatives. In recognition of this, CAN awarded **Advocacy travel awards** to trainee advocates to encourage their participation in the meeting and the advocacy session. These travel awards were given following the recommendation by Leaders of Canadian SfN Chapters, who were asked to nominate one trainee from their chapter for these awards.

Seven Canadian SfN Chapters submitted nominations. CAN awarded a \$500 award to each nominated individual. List here: <http://can-acn.org/2017-travel-awards>

### **Advocacy workshop for trainees**

CAN offered an outreach and advocacy workshop for trainees at CAN2017. Presented and hosted by Jason Tetro, CAN Advocacy officer and best-selling Canadian science communicator, this workshop aimed at helping trainees translate their research findings into content that can be shared with the public, the media and elected officials. A full description of the event can be found here: <http://can-acn.org/documents/2017/Tetro-CAN-Workshop-Summary-CAN2017.pdf>

This event served to partially fulfill CAN's mandate to develop an advocacy workshop for our members.

## **Mental Health Advocate Margaret Trudeau lecture at CAN2017**

CAN was honoured to have **Margaret Trudeau**, a prominent mental health advocate and mother of the Prime Minister of Canada, as a special guest lecturer on opening night of the meeting.

Her work to increase awareness of mental health has been lauded worldwide and her commitment to neuroscience is unyielding. Her presentation showed the real-life impact advances in mental health research have for patients, like her, who struggle with mental health issues. Her highly personal account of her own struggles, and of how she achieved balance in her life, was an inspiration to all neuroscientists present.



In the picture, Nobel laureate Linda Buck (Presidential lecturer), Margaret Trudeau, Freda Miller (CAN President) and Lynn Raymond (CAN Vice-President) at the CAN2017 opening reception.

## **Meeting of Canadian SfN Chapter representatives at CAN2017**

As a follow-up to the first meeting of Canadian SfN Chapter leaders, which was held as a satellite event at the SfN2016 meeting, CAN invited the leaders of all Canadian SfN Chapters to a breakfast meeting during the CAN2017 meeting.

This meeting was an opportunity to discuss how the outreach and advocacy activities from across Canada could be shared, and the role CAN could play as a facilitator for exchange between Chapters.

As a result of this meeting, a discussion group on the social platform Slack was set up. Student advocates and other advocacy leaders from across the country have been invited to join this group to share resources, information and ideas.

### **Survey of Advocacy initiatives**

As a lead-up to this meeting, CAN conducted a survey of all neuroscience outreach and advocacy activities in Canada. This survey helped determine the type of initiatives that could be shared across platforms.

### **Leaders of the Canadian SfN Chapters networking initiatives**

CAN Board member **Alanna Watt**, and Manitoba SfN Chapter leader **Sari Hannila** were identified as leaders for the Canadian SfN Chapters networking initiatives.

### **Presentation of the Canadian Brain Research Strategy at CAN2017**

The Canadian Brain Research Strategy is an integrated national research effort that builds on Canada's strengths and current investments in cutting-edge collaborative neuroscience to drive transformative outcomes in neurological and mental health for Canadians. CAN hosted an information meeting about this new initiative to develop a National Brain Strategy for Canada, and invited partners from the Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology, Brain Canada, and the Neurological Health Charities of Canada to participate in the discussions about this important project.

CAN invited its members to participate in the online Canadian Brain Research Strategy consultation. More: <https://www.canadianbrain.ca/>

### **Meeting of the CAN advocacy committee & CAN Board meeting**

The CAN Advocacy committee held a meeting in Montreal to discuss and define the advocacy priorities of our Association. This was also discussed at the CAN Board meeting.

### **The CAN Advocacy committee and CAN Board of Directors identified the implementation of the recommendations of Canada's Fundamental Science Review (Naylor report) as its most important advocacy objective for the upcoming year.**

The committee views the recent publication of Canada's Fundamental Science Review by our government as a unique opportunity to address the research funding difficulties facing Canadian neuroscientists today. View an overview of the Naylor report, prepared by CAN, here: <https://supportthereport.ca/support-the-report-talking-points/>

The Naylor report recommendations closely parallel the concerns our members have expressed in surveys CAN has conducted in the last years:

- Need for increased investment in the three major Governmental Science Funding Agencies (Canadian Institutes of Health Research - CIHR, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council - NSERC, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council - SSHRC)
- Need for increased support and investment in fundamental research
- Need for increased support and investment in investigator-initiated projects

The Naylor report has received unanimous support in the Canadian scientific community.



While the Naylor report gives a clear assessment of the funding situation in Canada, and provides clear recommendations to improve the funding situation, the **Canadian government has given no clear indication it will implement its recommendations.**

CAN, and most other scientific and research association, and university representatives have joined forces to promote the Naylor report to the general public and to elected officials.

## CAN Actions in Support of Canada's Fundamental Science Review

### **Meeting with other scientific associations to define a common and effective lobbying strategy.**

Advocacy committee chair **Katalin Toth** attended Research Canada's 2017 Annual General Meeting in Toronto on June 6th 2017. This was an opportunity to meet with other neuroscience advocates to discuss and share, to develop common and impactful messaging strategies.

To this end, CAN has joined forces with other Canadian science promotion societies and associations:

- Association of Canadian Early Career Health Researchers
- Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences
- Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology
- Partnership Group for Science and Engineering
- Research Canada
- Neurological health charities of Canada

### **CAN publishes and shares Talking points about the Naylor Report**

The Naylor report is a very complete, 280 page report. An executive summary version was also published, which is 25 pages long. CAN recognized the need for a two-page summary, distilling the most important points of the report and its context, to make this document easier to share and present to the general public or elected officials. The document prepared by CAN is available online here:

<https://supportthereport.ca/support-the-report-talking-points/>

### **CAN Launches the SupportTheReport.ca website**

Many initiatives were launched by different organisations to support the report. While the #supportthereport hashtag was shared by all, there was a need to have an easy to remember URL so that interested individuals could find the relevant information easily. CAN put up a simple website on the supportthereport.ca url, on which we share resources that are useful for members and partners who wish to take action to support the report.

This website is here: <https://supportthereport.ca/>

## **Participation in Social Media Campaigns to #SupportTheReport**

A very active social media campaign around the hashtag #supportthereport has been launched by multiple Canadian organisations, to share news and information to support the implementation. Strategic discussions have also taken place on twitter. CAN has participated in sharing these important resources with our members.

## **#SummerofscienceCAN - Invitation to our members to write to their elected officials**

CAN sent an invitation to our members to write to their member of Parliament to raise awareness about the Naylor report with elected officials during the summer. This shared initiative, launched by the Association of Canadian Early Career Health Researchers, has led to many meetings and letters to Canadian members of Parliament.

## **Invitation sent to trainees to participate in the #studentsforthereport campaign**

A letter writing and social media campaign was launched by the Science & Policy Exchange. CAN members were invited to participate in these campaigns

## **CAN Advocacy committee members actively #supportthereport**

- David Kaplan attended the event: A researcher's response to Canada's fundamental science review. This one-day summit was organised to constructively discuss moving forward and implementing the recommendations of the Naylor report. Dr. David Naylor, Chair of the Expert Review Panel, was one of the speakers at this event. <http://sciencereview.lunenfeld.ca/>
- Liisa Galea went to Ottawa with a delegation from the University of British Columbia to meet with Canadian Science Minister and to support the implementation of the Fundamental Science Review <http://psych.ubc.ca/ubc-researchers-promote-the-fundamental-science-review-on-parliament-hill>

## **Budget recommendations**

This year unanimous and unified support from various research entities is critical to support the recommendations of the Naylor Report. PAGSE and Research Canada submitted the 2018 FINA budget recommendations where we strongly expressed unanimous support for all the recommendations of the Naylor Report.

## **CAN news: highlighting neuroscience research achievements targeted to a general audience**

With the help of CAN Advocacy Officer Jason Tetro, CAN has developed a column profiling recently published neuroscience articles with the public in mind. These reports provide perspective on the implications of the research on the lives of Canadians. The articles have been enjoyed both by the neuroscience community as well as the public.

### **Launch of a patient stories section**

As a way to further show the importance and relevance of neuroscience research for the general public, CAN has launched a new initiative, to feature stories of patients whose lives were improved by neuroscience research. A pilot story was written by CAN Advocacy Officer Jason Tetro, and posted on the CAN website as part of the CAN news section. Identifying patients that are willing to post their stories has been a challenge, but a call to our membership has been made to help identify candidates.

## Plans for Advocacy 2017-2018

The CAN Advocacy committee will focus its efforts on continuing work with our partners to support the implementation of the Naylor report, supporting robust funding for fundamental research in Canada.

Discussions are currently taking place to find partners to share costs associated with hiring a professional lobbyist to help focus and target our efforts for maximum efficiency. While the Board of Directors of CAN recognizes the importance of the involvement of professionals in this process and would be willing to invest financially in such an effort, so far we have not been able to find partners among other associations.

CAN will continue to advocate for research to the general public, the government, neuroscientists and the media, as our four previously defined targets of influence.

Planned activities for the coming month

- CAN will participate in the Biotechnology in Health Research Reception of the Health Research Caucus on Parliament Hill on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 where the importance of





investment on research that can lead to breakthroughs in biotechnology will be highlighted.

- CAN will support the meeting on Stem Cell Research held at the Parliament on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
- CAN is continuing to support Interstellate, a collection of images from neuroscience research with the aim to share the beauty and intrigue of our work with the general public. CAN is an official sponsor of Volume 2 of the magazine.
- CAN continues to support the activities of Convergence, a new organization aiming to publicize neuroscience research through art.
- CAN will promote a lecture on the neurobiology of wine tasting to the public at the next CAN meeting held in May 2018 in Vancouver.
- The next CAN meeting will feature several activities supporting women in science under the leadership of Dr Judy Illes (UBC), a leading expert in the field.