



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

CAN-ACN Advocacy update – March 2021

The Canadian Association for Neuroscience’s main objective in the past months has been to engage directly with Members of Parliament, Senators and Parliament hill staff to promote increased investment in scientific research by the Canadian government.

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

Key points:

- 27 meetings with key members of Parliament, Senator and Parliamentary staff
- Over 50 CAN 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.



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2. 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 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.

3. 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.

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

In preparation for budget 2021, the Canadian government held two series of consultations. CAN submitted recommendations to both instances. 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.

- 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>

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

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>)



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5. Promotion of basic and neuroscience research in national publications

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 is being produced to be shared on social media outlets in April, May and June.

6. 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
- 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.

7. 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/>

8. 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.

9. 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:

[\(https://can-acn.org/advocacy/\)](https://can-acn.org/advocacy/)

10. 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/>

a. 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/>

b. Highlighting Brain Star Award Winners

CAN has developed a new 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 2019 competition and produced features of all 15 winners on the CAN website. These features were shared weekly on our social media accounts following a promotion plan developed by CAN and approved by CIHR-INMHA.

View the 15 profiles here: <https://can-acn.org/congratulations-to-the-2019-can-cihr-inmha-brain-star-award-winners/>

Peer-review of the 2020 awards is underway, as this collaboration continues.

11. Supporting grass-roots advocacy initiatives in Canada.

We are proud to announce the launch of 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.

Thank you for reading our report!