

CAN-ACN Advocacy update – October 2022

The following report covers the advocacy activities of the Canadian Association for neuroscience from September 30, 2021 to October 1, 2022.

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
- advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion in neuroscience research in Canada
- promote neuroscience research in Canada to the public, to show its importance for all Canadians.
- Work to promote the economic value of basic research in Canada.

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The CAN Advocacy team

CAN has renewed the membership in the CAN Advocacy committee through an open call for applications in the Summer of 2021. The current membership in the committee is

President: **Karun Singh**, University of Toronto

Adriana Di Polo, Université de Montréal, CAN Vice-President

Liisa Galea, U of British Columbia

Lisa Saksida, U Western

Haung (Ho) Yu, CAMH – U of Toronto

Tabrez Siddiqui, U of Manitoba

Ciaran Murphy-Royal, Université de Montréal

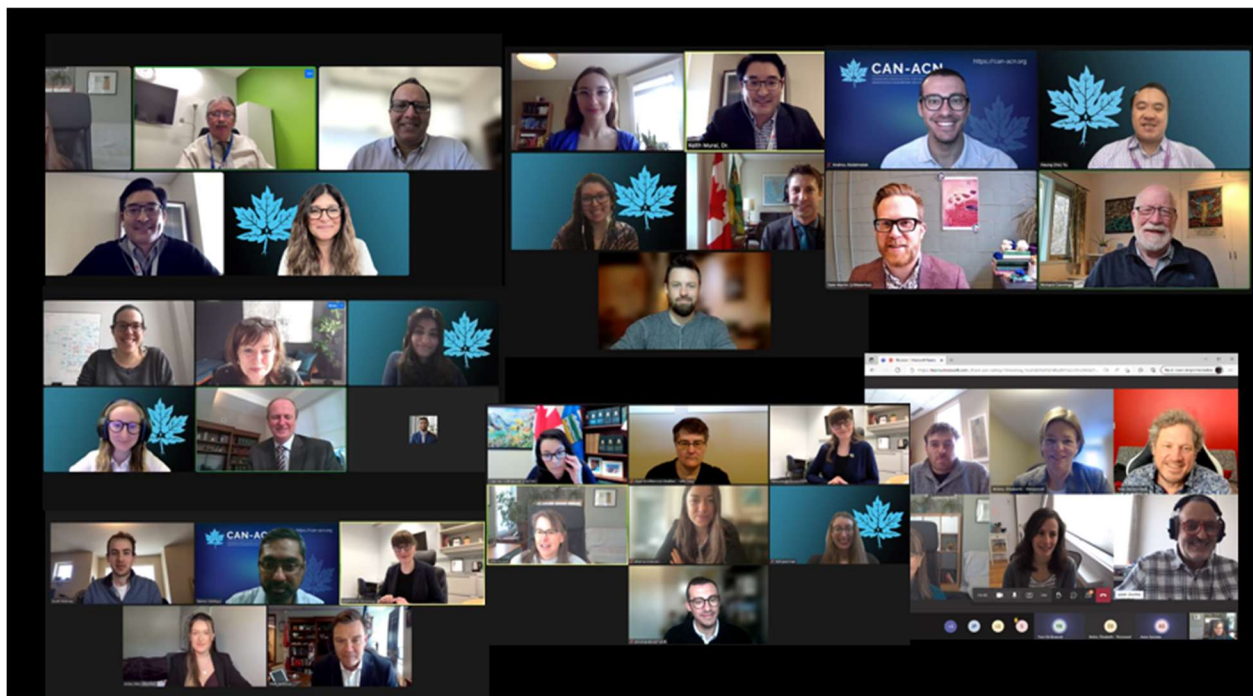
Leanna Kalinowski, U of Toronto (trainee member)

First CAN in-person Parliament Hill Day planned for November 3, 2022 in Ottawa

At the time of writing this report, we are in the process of planning our first ever in-person Parliament Hill, which will take place November 3, 2022. We have identified 14 neuroadvocates from across Canada who will meet in Ottawa for a training session followed by a full day of meetings with members of Parliament, Senators and Parliamentary staff to advocate for increased funding for research in Canada. CAN is working with the Public Affairs firm Temple Scott Associates, who have sent over one hundred invitations and will work with us to organize a full day of meetings with our neuroadvocates.

CAN Parliament Hill Week – March 21 – 25, 2022 – Virtual event

In March 2022, **48 CAN members participated as neuroadvocates in 25 virtual meetings** with Members of Parliament, Senators and Parliamentary staff, to showcase the important work Canadian neuroscientists do for this country, and to advocate for increased funding for tri-council (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC).



Neuroscientist participants were recruited through an open call to our membership.

Our members met with

- Members of all major Canadian political parties
- Members of the new Science and Research Committee, of the Health Committee, of the Industry and Technology committee and of the Human resources committee (permanent committees of the House of Commons)
- The office of the Minister of Health
- The Parliamentary Secretary of the new Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
- Senators
- Members of the Health Research Caucus
- The presidents of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

The short-term results of the March 2022 Hill week was the identification of multiple science champions on Parliament Hill, and invitations to appear in front of House of Commons standing committees, and neuroadvocate training. In the long term, this event has contributed to building relationships and increasing awareness of the importance of science funding for Canada.

Advocacy training at CAN2022

CAN organized an advocacy training lunch at the CAN2022 in person meeting, on Friday May 13, 12PM – 1:30 PM

The title of the session was “Science Advocacy – Why it matters, and how you can participate”, and featured presenters:

- Karun Singh, University of Toronto & University Health Network, Chair of the CAN advocacy committee
- Wai Haung (Ho) Yu, CAMH & University of Toronto, Member of the CAN Advocacy committee

Following this event, a PDF version of the advocacy training presentation and a list of resources and contacts were made available to our membership through our website and shared via our newsletter

- [CAN Advocacy training presentation \(PDF\)](#)
- [CAN Advocacy – Selected resources & contact list \(May 2022\)](#)

CAN supports the 2022 Black in Neuro week

Black in neuro is an organization whose mission is to diversify the neurosciences by building a community that celebrates and empowers Black scholars and professionals in neuroscience-related fields. You can learn more about the organization on their website: <https://blackinneuro.com/>

CAN is proud to have supported the 2022 Black in Neuro week which took place July 25 to 31, 2022 as Neuron level sponsors. The week featured social media posts and discussion panels on varied and engaging topics every days of #BINW22 week and was an opportunity to showcase Black in neuro community members in Canada through social media posts



CAN2022 meeting event: Picture A Scientist- Viewing and Panel Discussion

At the CAN2022 meeting, the CAN EDI committee invited the Canadian Neuroscience community to a panel discussion of the film “Picture a Scientist”, hoping to ask the question “When you picture a neuroscientist, who do you see? The panel discussion focused on perspective taking and discussing how to make Neuroscience more diverse, equitable, inclusive and just. The documentary was viewable in the poster area through-out the conference

Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) 2022 Public lecture: Focused ultrasound for the delivery of therapeutics to the brain (virtual event)

CAN hosted a public lecture on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 to showcase groundbreaking neuroscience research being done in Canada. Hosted by Dr. Carol Schuurmans, Chair of Local Organizing Committee for CAN 2022, the event featured speakers: Dr. Kullervo Hynynen, Dr. Isabelle Aubert, Dr. Nir Lipsman, with Q&A Moderators: Dr. Rikke Kofoed and Dr. Yacine Touahri

More event details and a recording are available on the CAN website

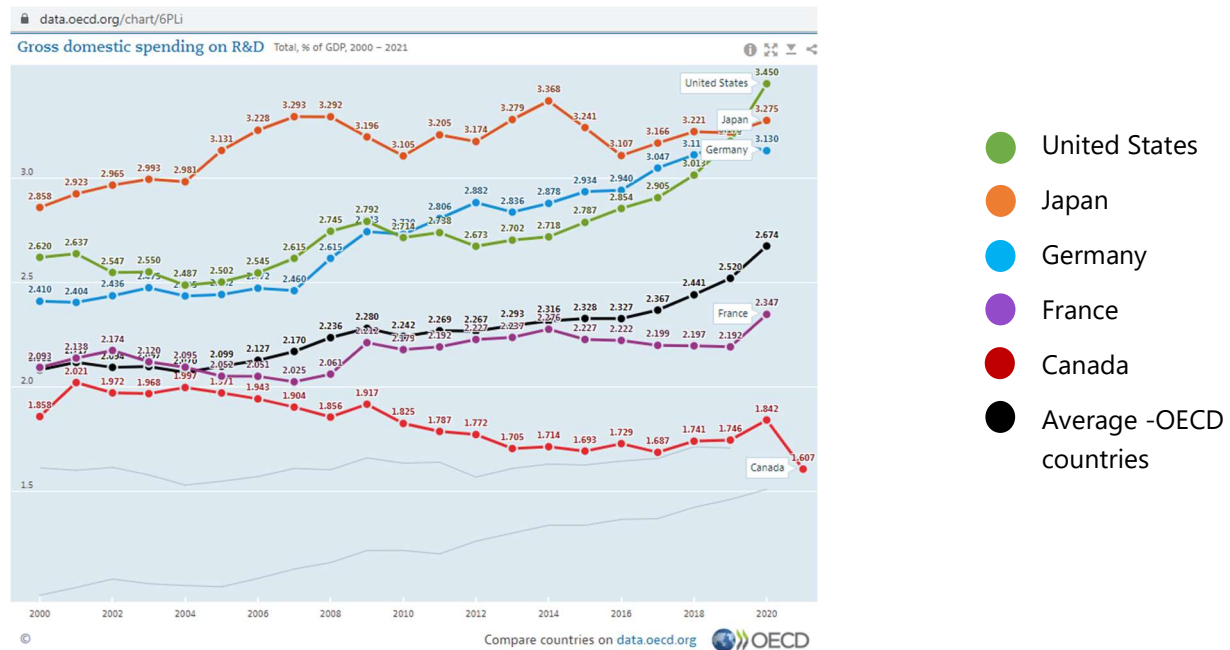
<https://can-acn.org/meeting-2022/canadian-association-for-neuroscience-can-2022-public-lecture-focused-ultrasound-for-the-delivery-of-therapeutics-to-the-brain/>

Publication of key statistics on research funding in Canada

CAN publishes and maintains a list of key statistics on science funding in Canada.

<https://can-acn.org/science-funding-in-canada-statistics/>

According to the latest data from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development <http://www.oecd.org/>) Canada is the only country in the G7 whose investments in Research and Development have steadily declined over the last 20 years.



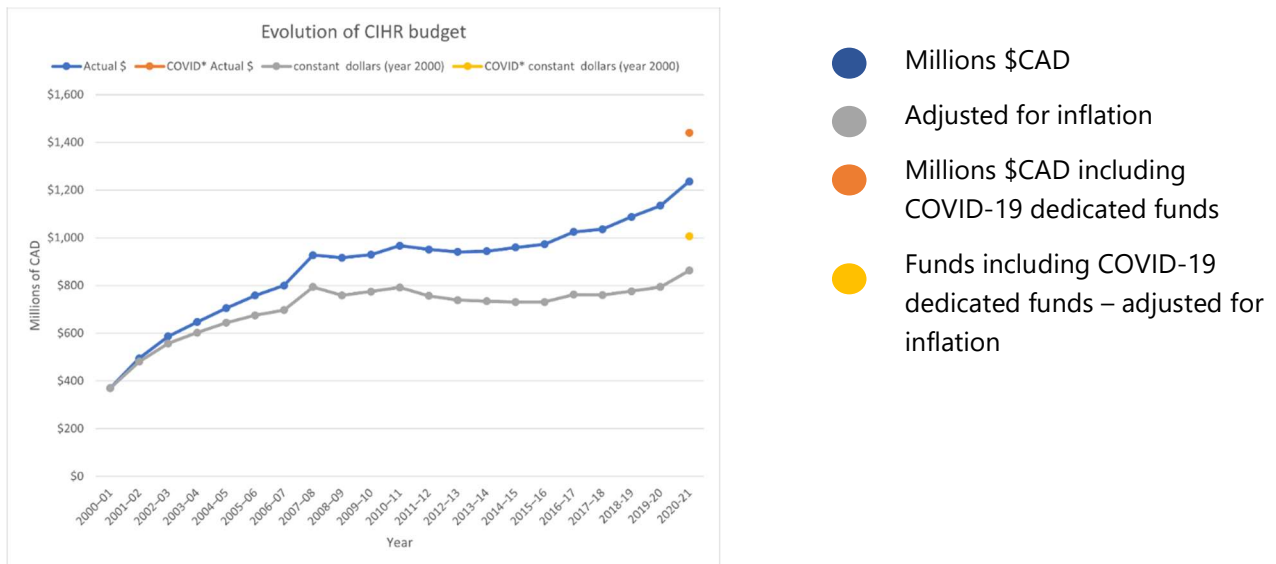


OECD Data on gross domestic spending on Research and Development - Canada compared to other countries of the G7.1

Canada now ranks second to last among G7 countries in terms of gross domestic spending on Research & Development (R&D), with only 1.6% of its GDP invested in R&D. This comparatively low investment level places Canada below the average of 2.7% for OECD countries and well below the United States (3.4%), and other countries with fast-growing economies such as South Korea (4.8%) and Israel (5.4%) with respect to gross domestic spending in R&D.

We recognize that government investment in R&D is only a small proportion of the total R&D investment in a country. However, research shows that government investment is multiplied by private investments, leading to a much higher return on investment. Many countries have recognized this, including Japan, Germany, and the United States. Looking to our American counterparts, in May 2021, President Biden's first big budget request proposed increases for science budgets, including a 21% increase to the American equivalent of CIHR, the National Institutes of Health (NIH)². The NIH's 2021 budget was \$45 billion USD (approx. \$62 billion CAD), compared to CIHR's \$1.44 billion CAD (which includes one-time investments in COVID-19 research). This represents a 43-fold difference in funding support for CIHR, which contrasts with the nine-fold difference in population between the United States and Canada.

Canada has much to lose by not supporting its scientists. The competition is strong, and even if Canada's quality of life is enviable, high caliber researchers are attracted by the much higher financial means available to them in the United States, and other countries. If Canada does not increase its support for science, the reality of the brain drain will worsen.



Stagnation in the CIHR budget between 2006 and 2018. The budget for CIHR in 2007-2008 was \$927M and planned spending for 2020-2021 was \$1,236M. While this represents an increase in actual dollars, it represents only an 8.7% increase over 14 years when inflation is considered (adjusting to constant dollars by using the Bank of Canada inflation calculator). Moreover, application pressure from researchers has

¹ (Accessed on 10 October, 2022 Chart permanent URL: <https://data.oecd.org/chart/6PLi>)

² <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/05/biden-seeks-big-increases-science-budgets>

increased (3850 applications in 2006 vs. 4395 in 2021), and the cost of experimental materials increases at a rate higher than inflation.

Note: Year 2020-2021 included Statutory Authorities \$203.6M time-limited funding for COVID-19 research (Pursuant to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act). As this funding is a one-time addition to the CIHR budget not dedicated to the regular programs, it is indicated as extra data points (in yellow and orange in the graph)

Graph data source: <https://can-acn.org/science-funding-in-canada-statistics/>

CAN outreach and advocacy awards

CAN attributed three Advocacy and outreach awards in the last year:

- CAN Outreach & Advocacy Award: The Peaceful Brain
Description: <https://can-acn.org/can-outreach-advocacy-award-the-peaceful-brain/>
- CAN Advocacy award: Montreal Neurological Institute Open Outreach Program
Description: <https://can-acn.org/montreal-neurological-institute-open-outreach-program/>
- CAN advocacy award winner: Who can become a scientist? (University of Victoria)
Description: <https://can-acn.org/can-advocacy-award-winner-who-can-become-a-scientist/>

An open call for applications is active, and a reminder was sent to our membership in our latest newsletter

Hosting of a science policy session with Senator Stan Kutcher

On Monday, April 25, 2022 the Canadian Association for Neuroscience and the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences welcomed the Honourable Senator Stan Kutcher for a session on science policy and advice.

Dr. Kutcher is well known Canadian Champion for science, who shared his insight on the importance of science advocacy, and the need for scientists to engage in politics and with politicians.

Key take-away messages and a recording of the event is available on the CAN website: <https://can-acn.org/recording-available-science-policy-session-with-senator-stan-kutcher-april-25-2022>

Engagement with the House of Commons permanent committee on Science and Research

The newly formed House of Commons permanent committee on Science and Research held its first studies in 2022, and CAN submitted a brief for the study titled “Successes, challenges and opportunities for Science in Canada.

Our brief, titled: [Increased investment in scientific research: An investment in the health and prosperity of Canadians today and tomorrow](#) provides clear arguments supporting the proposal that *The government of Canada significantly and predictably increase investments in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for the benefit of all Canadians.*

The brief was published on the House of Commons website on March 14, 2022



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

On June 6, 2022 the new House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research tabled its first ever [report](#), as part of its study on “Successes, Challenges and Opportunities for Science in Canada”. The Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) was one of sixteen organizations that submitted a [written submission](#) as part of the consultations. The Committee held meetings over the course of three months, which CAN closely followed, hearing from science and research organizations, post-secondary institutions, companies and government departments.

CAN welcomed all 13 of the recommendations made to government, and was pleased that **one of our recommendations (An initial 25% boost to the budgets of the three granting councils followed by a 10% yearly increase) was specifically referenced in the report.**

Survey of the CAN membership on advocacy targets

CAN conducted a survey of members August 23 to September 6, 2022 to get their opinion on our advocacy objectives and targets for the coming months and years.

The survey was sent by email to our membership and on our website. We received 147 responses.

The full results are presented here:

<https://can-acn.org/can-2022-advocacy-survey/>

Our members clearly indicated that CAN should continue its advocacy work to increase funding for CIHR (98% agree or strongly agree), NSERC (97% agree or strongly agree) and SSHRC (68% agree or strongly agree).

Our members also indicated they support advocacy to increase the number and value of student stipends funded by the federal government (94% agree or strongly agree), and for increased targeted funding for brain and neuroscience research in Canada (93% agree or strongly agree).

Participation in pre-budget consultations of the government of Canada

The government of Canada launched two pre-budget consultations in the last year, and CAN submitted briefs for both consultations.

February 2022 – submission in advance of Budget 2022 – available here:

<https://can-acn.org/docs/CAN-ACN-prebudget-consultation-brief-2022-02-24.pdf>

October 2022 – submission in advance of Budget 2023 – available here:

https://can-acn.org/documents/2022/CAN-ACN-FINA_pre_budget_brief.pdf

CAN publishes a response to the 2022 Canadian budget (April 2022)

Following the publication of the 2022 budget, CAN published a response to the budget on our website and social media accounts. This response was also sent via email to key stakeholders, including the offices of the Prime Minister of Canada, of the Minister of Health, and also of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. We expressed our disappointment with the lack of commitment to supporting fundamental research in Canada

“While we applaud the targeted investments announced in budget 2022, we must also **express our disappointment at the lack of re-investment in fundamental research funded through CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC.** These three entities are the core funding mechanism for basic science in Canada, and we

are very disheartened that no new funding for non-targeted research supported by these agencies have been announced in budget 2022. In effect, when inflation adjusted, purchasing power continues to decline and is compounded by supply chain pressures that significantly increased costs during the pandemic.”

Our full response is available here

<https://can-acn.org/can-acn-response-to-budget-2022-a-plan-to-grow-our-economy-and-make-life-more-affordable>

Meeting with tri-Agency leaders to develop a partnership to promote research funding in Canada

CAN met with key executives at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to initiate a collaboration to promote the economic value of government investments in research. We are working with the program teams at these agencies to obtain statistics on highly qualified personnel trained and hired through tri-agency funding, and other economic impact of the funding.

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/>

Partnership building

CAN is continuing to build and nurture partnerships with Canadian organizations to promote investments in basic research and brain and neuroscience targeted initiatives.