



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

CAN-ACN Advocacy update – August 2024

The following report covers the advocacy activities of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience from **March 1, 2024, to August 30, 2024.**

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The Canadian Association for Neuroscience's main objectives in the past months have continued to be 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.

CAN Advocacy Committee Leadership

CAN has an active and engaged Advocacy Committee that drives all its advocacy activities.

The current membership of the CAN Advocacy Committee is:

Co-Chairs: **Liisa Galea**, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) & **Tabrez Siddiqui**, University of Manitoba

Committee members:

John Mielke, University of Waterloo (joined October 2023)

Ciaran Murphy-Royal, Université de Montréal

Shalina Ousman, University of Calgary (joined October 2023)

Lisa Saksida, U Western

Melanie Woodin, University of Toronto, CAN Vice-President

Haug (Ho) Yu, CAMH – U of Toronto

Trainee members:

Shalini Iyer, University of British Columbia (joined October 2023)

Amy Smith-Dijak, McGill University (joined October 2023)

Leanne Young, McGill University (joined October 2023)

2024-2025 Main Advocacy Targets

The CAN advocacy committee works with our membership, partners, and public affairs consultants to develop and define our advocacy targets. Based on these consultations, our current targets are:

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada increase the core budgets of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) by ten percent annually for the next five years, as recommended in the *2023 Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support*

*System*¹, which stressed the necessity of increased funding for investigator-initiated research and talent support. The objective of this recommendation is to bring Canada's investments in research and development to a level on par with other countries in the G7.

Recommendation 2:

Given the rising prevalence of neurological and mental health disorders, it is imperative that the Government of Canada prioritize brain and mental health research. To address this urgent need, a comprehensive moonshot program dedicated to understanding the brain should be launched. This initiative will drive innovation and lead to significant improvements in public health across the country.

CAN prepares for the next CAN Parliament Hill Day

CAN's advocacy team has identified November 5, 2024, as the date for the next CAN Parliament Hill day. This will present an exceptional opportunity for a team of CAN advocates to meet face-to-face or virtually with members of Parliament, Senators, Parliamentary staff members and important senior civil servants to advocate for a increased support for the major federal funding agencies in Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and for making research on Brain and Mental Health a national priority.

Read CAN's submission to the House of Commons Permanent committee on Finance (FINA) pre-budget consultations

(August 2024)

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance invited Canadians to participate in its annual pre-budget consultations process. The committee will table a report on these consultations in the House of Commons with recommendations to be considered by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in the development of the 2025 federal budget.

Read CAN's submission to these consultations here:

https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/CAN-FINA-Pre-budget-Aug_2024.pdf

CAN responds to science investments announced in Budget 2024

(April 2024)

The 2024 Canadian budget made several important announcements related to science funding, and we were happy to highlight these in our response to the budget.

¹ <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/panel-federal-research-support/en/report-advisory-panel-federal-research-support-system>



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We specifically applauded the **increased support for Canadian science graduate students and postdoctoral fellows**. Budget 2024 will provide \$825 million over five years to increase the annual value of master's and doctoral student scholarships to \$27,000 and \$40,000, respectively, and post-doctoral fellowships to \$70,000. The number of research scholarships and fellowships will also be increased, building to approximately 1,720 more graduate students or fellows benefiting each year.

We also applauded **increased funding for 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. Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$1.8 billion over five years, starting in 2024-25, to SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR. This is a welcome increase to the basic funding mechanism for the Canadian science ecosystem.

Budget 2024 also announced investments of **\$20M per year, starting in 2024-2025 for four years, to support Brain Canada**. Understanding how the brain works is key to addressing brain and mental health issues, which are among the most complex to understand, but also the most important we face as a Nation. Brain Canada plays a key role in our research ecosystem. Brain Canada is a national convenor and enabler of the Canadian brain research community, funding high-risk, high-reward brain research programs across the country. Brain Canada's unique partnership with the Government of Canada, through the Canada Brain Research Fund, has been a cornerstone in advancing brain research for over a decade.

Budget 2024 is a great step in the right direction, particularly in its support of trainees. We hope Canada will continue to expand our research efforts aiming toward a world class level comparable to other countries in the G7.

Mobilization to recapitalize the Canada Brain Research Fund

(February 2024 – update in April 2024)

CAN sent a letter to key Ministers of the government of Canada in February 2024 to urgently appeal for a recapitalization of the Canada Brain Research Fund.

We wrote to express great concern over the impending loss of federal funding for the Canada Brain Research Fund after March 31, 2024.

Read the full letter here:

<https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CAN-Brain-Canada-support-letter-2024.pdf>

In response to the large-scale mobilisation of stakeholders, and the hard work of the Brain Canada team, Budget 2024 announced investments of \$20M per year, starting in 2024-2025 for four years, to support Brain Canada, as noted above.



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Invitation to write to the Canadian Minister of Finances in advance of Budget 2024

(March 2024)

In addition, CAN sent an invitation to all our members to write to the Minister of Finances, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, to remind her and her team of the importance of investing in scientific research as they worked on the 2024 Canadian budget.

CAN drafted a sample letter for our members, which could be downloaded here: [CAN letter to Freeland](https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CAN-letter-to-Freeland.docx) (<https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CAN-letter-to-Freeland.docx>)

Publication of a position paper by CAN President Adriana Di Polo on the importance brain research in Canada

(March 2024)

Read an [interview with CAN president Adriana Di Polo](https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/12-LivJess-BrainHealth-TS-PR.pdf) published online and included as a special insert in the March 30 Toronto Star: [Toronto-Star-insert-BrainHealth-March2024](https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/12-LivJess-BrainHealth-TS-PR.pdf) (<https://can-acn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/12-LivJess-BrainHealth-TS-PR.pdf>)

Advocacy session at the CAN2024 meeting

The 2024 CAN advocacy lunch session took place at the Westin Bayshore Vancouver on May 20th from noon to 1:30PM, as part of the 2024 Annual meeting of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience <https://can-acn.org/meeting-2024/>.

The 2024 CAN advocacy lunch session focused on the power of storytelling to strengthen our advocacy message. Scientists are experts in communicating science with their colleagues, but communicating to the public and decision makers in engaging and enlightening ways is a skill they must also develop. Stories are a powerful tool to engage the public, combat misinformation and increase research funding.

We put together panelists with a broad range of expertise to help our members understand the elements to good storytelling and why it is so important.

- Duncan McHugh, Digital & Instructional Media Producer | The Learning Centre | ic.landfood.ubc.ca, University of British Columbia
- Kim Hellemans, Assistant Professor and the Associate Dean of Science (Student Recruitment, Wellness and Success) at Carleton University & co-host of the podcast, [Minding the Brain](https://science.carleton.ca/profile/dr-kim-hellemans/). <https://science.carleton.ca/profile/dr-kim-hellemans/>
- Alireza Kamyabi, Policy analyst in the Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer in Vancouver Coastal Health. <https://www.alirezakamyabi.com/>

Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) 2024 Public lecture:

CAN hosted the 2024 CAN public lectures in Vancouver, May 18, 2024, at Science World Theatre. The title of the session was “Cannabis and Psychedelics: Hype or hope for addictions, brain diseases, and mental health”.

The event was hosted by Dr. Mark S. Cembrowski, Assistant Professor, Department of Cellular and Physiological Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, and member of the Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health.

Speakers and Topics

Dr. Catharine Winstanley: The puzzle of problem gambling: addiction without the drugs?

Dr. Catharine Winstanley, PhD is a Professor in the Department of Psychology and a member of the Centre for Brain Health at the University of British Columbia.

Dr. Matthew Hill: Cannabis: Separating fact from myth

Dr. Matthew Hill, PhD, is a Professor at the Cumming School of Medicine, Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy, University of Calgary, and Full Member of the Hotchkiss Brain Institute & of the Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research and Education. He is also a Child Health & Wellness Researcher at Alberta Children’s Hospital Research Institute

Dr. Leah Mayo: Psychedelics as new mental health treatments: hype or hope?

Dr. Leah Mayo, PhD is Assistant Professor at the Cumming School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, University of Calgary, Full Member of the Hotchkiss Brain Institute, Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research and Education. She is also Parker Research Chair in Psychedelics at the University of Calgary

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 more than 20 years.

Another alarming statistic is the stagnation of the budget of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR, the Canadian equivalent of NIH), resulting in dropping success rates in funding competitions.

The statistics compiled by CAN are used to support our asks and to inform the public and elected officials we meet in our advocacy efforts.



Promoting Canadian neuroscience success stories on our websites & 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/>

As reported in our previous advocacy report, we also recently launched a new website to promote the economic value of brain research in Canada, modeled partly on the “Impact of NIH Research” webpage (<https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/impact-nih-research>).

The website is available here:

<https://canadabrainpower.com/>

The target audience for this website is members of the public, but also policy makers, to provide concrete examples of brain research and its impact for all Canadians. We are currently working on a model to regularly update this website.

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. In the last year, CAN has partnered with the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences, CIHR-INMHA, Research Canada, the Canadian Brain Research Strategy, Neurological Health Charities of Canada, Canadian Neurological Sciences Federation, Brain Canada and others to promote research and science in Canada.

The Society for Neuroscience remains CAN's most important advocacy partner.

Thank you for reading our advocacy report. If you have any questions, please contact the CAN Advocacy Officer, Julie Poupart at the following address: Julie.Poupart@can-acn.org. You can find more information about all our advocacy activities here: <https://can-acn.org/advocacy/>