

CAN-ACN Advocacy update – March 2026

The following report covers the advocacy activities of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience from **September 1, 2025, to March 15, 2026**.

Contents

CAN Advocacy Objectives	1
CAN Advocacy Committee Leadership	1
Review of services and open call for public affairs consultant firm services July – September 2025.	2
Project kick-off meeting with Santis Health (December 2025)	3
Preparatory meetings with key members of Parliament staff	3
CAN President Douglas Zochodne writes a letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney	3
Planning the next Parliament Hill Day – April 14, 2026	4
CAN Advocacy workshop at the upcoming Canadian Neuroscience Meeting	4
Publication of key statistics on research funding in Canada	4
Promoting Canadian neuroscience success stories on our websites & Social media accounts.	5
Partnership building.....	5

CAN Advocacy Objectives

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

- Promote increased investment in scientific research by the Canadian government by direct engagement with Canadian Members of Parliament, Senators and Parliament hill staff
- 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 membership of the committee and leadership has been renewed in recent months. The current membership of the CAN Advocacy Committee is:

Co-chairs:

- **Tabrez Siddiqui**, University of Manitoba

- **Susanne Schmid**, Western University

Committee members:

- **Shalina Ousman**, University of Calgary
- **Alyson Fournier**, McGill University, as CAN Vice-President
- **Tamara Franklin**, Dalhousie University

Trainee members:

- **Zahraa Chorghay**, University of Toronto
- **Vina Li**, Queen's University

Notably, the Canadian Association for Neuroscience is proud to announce that Dr. Susanne Schmid, Professor and Vice-Dean Basic Medical Sciences at Western University has accepted the invitation to be co-chair of the CAN Advocacy Committee. Dr. Schmid is a recognized leader in the field of sensory processing and filtering mechanisms, including disruptions in neurodevelopmental disorders/autism.

She is interested in politics and policy making and her interest in lobbying aligns with CAN's target to increase general funding for research (CIHR project and NSERC discovery grants). An important message is that knowledge translation can only work if new knowledge is created through discovery-based projects. The latter needs to be funded publicly.

Review of services and open call for public affairs consultant firm services July – September 2025

The CAN advocacy committee has worked with the public affairs consultant firm Temple Scott Associates since 2021, and the committee suggested we review the services provided and reach out to other firms to increase our level of engagement with the government.

We specifically requested

1. Strategic advice on how to get our message heard by key stakeholders
2. Advice on specific actions to be taken to be most effective
3. Ways to engage and mobilize our members (including members at all career levels – from trainees to senior professors)

Our objective was to specifically increase the reach and quality of our engagement year-round, but also to review and improve our advocacy strategy in the changing political climate.

Through this process we have identified and hired **Santis Health**, a firm with deep familiarity with the Canadian research landscape, and a team with extensive experience and knowledge in Canadian

health policy and government, having worked federally and provincially for senior government officials from Health Ministers to Prime Ministers.

Project kick-off meeting with Santis Health (December 2025)

CAN invited members of the CAN advocacy committee and key stakeholders from institutions across Canada, including advocacy leaders that have been engaged with us in the past, to participate in an advocacy workshop hosted by Santis Health to brainstorm and review CAN's advocacy objectives to optimize our impact and reach.

Given the changing political climate and the general austerity mindset of the government, we have identified new ways to frame our message that resonate better with the government's priorities.

Following this meeting, we have worked with Santis to

- Develop of a detailed workplan
- Develop Stakeholder map of key decision makers, including bureaucrats, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.
- Plan the next Canadian Parliament Hill Day

Preparatory meetings with key members of Parliament staff

The CAN advocacy leadership has begun engagement with individuals identified by Santis in the stakeholder map of key decision makers. Specifically, we have met with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) staff members to discuss our advocacy efforts and to build relations in this very important Canadian institution; we have written to congratulate the new Parliament Secretary of Health, who is a key person in the Ministry of Health; and we have met with the staff of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Jobs and Families.

These meetings aim to broaden CAN's engagement to Ministries outside the Ministry of Health.

CAN President Douglas Zochodne writes a letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney

CAN President Douglas Zochodne sent a letter on behalf of CAN to the Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on the topic of Neuroscience research and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR – the equivalent of NIH) Project Grant Operations shortfalls. This timely letter was sent shortly after the announcement of the CIHR project grant

In this letter, Dr. Zochodne discussed the results from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Project Grant competitions, highlighting a significant opportunity for growth. Current data indicates:

- Funding rates are steadily decreasing and are now at 13.6%, down from 30% in the early 2000s, meaning the vast majority of highly-ranked, "excellent" research projects remain unsupported.

- Significant across-the-board budget reductions (often exceeding 23%) are applied to even the most successful grants to stretch limited resources.
- While our international peers continue to increase per-capita investment, Canadian researchers are finding it increasingly difficult to remain competitive on the global stage. Even longstanding laboratories with exceptional track records are at risk of closure and unable to maintain training and employment of Highly Qualified Personnel given recent inaccessibility of CIHR support.

Planning the next Parliament Hill Day – April 14, 2026

The Canadian budget had historically been tabled in March every year, however the current government has modified this schedule. The 2025 budget was tabled on November 4th, 2025, leading us to review our engagement schedule, and specifically the date of our Parliament Hill Day to be better aligned with the period when budget discussions take place in Ottawa. Engagement in the Spring (instead of in the Fall) will allow us to share our priorities with elected officials and staff in advance of budget discussions.

We have identified 16 neuroadvocates from across Canada to participate in our Hill Day meetings, and Santis is currently working on meeting invitation.

We look forward to reporting on our 2026 Hill Day in our next report to SfN.

CAN Advocacy workshop at the upcoming Canadian Neuroscience Meeting

We are currently working on an advocacy workshop titled: “Advocating together: the importance of partnership and collaboration to support research advocacy”.

We are especially thrilled that SfN representatives will participate, including Diane Lipscombe, SfN Past President and current chair of the SfN Government and Public Affairs Committee and Adam Katz, Director of Advocacy & Training at SfN. We are inviting other partners and collaborators to complete the roster of panelists.

The event will take place on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at noon in Montreal, during the Canadian Neuroscience Meeting.

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 both the World bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/>) and 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.

We have updated the published statistics in February 2026. These are often cited by our members and partners as a useful advocacy tool.

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 manage an additional 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, the CORE-COEUR group 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/>