

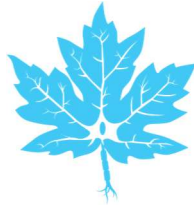
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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of
the 2026 Federal Budget**

Submitted by the Canadian Association for Neuroscience

May 5, 2026



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Recommendations

- 1) **Recommendation 1:** That the Government of Canada provide an immediate boost to the Canadian health research ecosystem by providing a targeted 25% increase to CIHR project grants in Budget 2026 with the long-term objective of restoring project grant application success rates to a minimum 25% with two competitions per year.
- 2) **Recommendation 2:** That the Government of Canada implement a multi-year plan to rebuild base research funding by increasing the core budgets of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) by 10% per year.
- 3) **Recommendation 3:** That the Government of Canada make neuroscience a core mission area within the mandate of the proposed federal capstone research agency announced in Budget 2024.
- 4) **Recommendation 4:** That the Government of Canada embed neuroscience research and expertise across national strategies and federal advisory bodies related to mental health, neurodegenerative disorders, defense, and artificial intelligence, and align federal programs to translate discoveries into real-world commercial impacts.



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Unlocking the Brain Economy: Transforming a \$61 Billion Health Burden into an Economic Multiplier

Neurological and mental health disorders impose a growing burden on Canadians, our healthcare system, and the economy. These conditions cost the Canadian economy an estimated \$61 billion annually, which is more than cancer and cardiovascular disease combined.¹ One in five Canadians — more than 7.5 million people — lives with a brain condition². Investments in basic research serve as an economic multiplier for Canada, catalyzing the innovations necessary to sustain a diverse and competitive economy. Prioritizing investments in basic research is essential for long-term prosperity, transforming this health and economic burden into a cornerstone of national growth and an economic multiplier.

Canadian neuroscientists work for all Canadians. Their discoveries provide hope for Canadians affected by neurological disorders and injuries, but beyond this important contribution, their research contributes to Canada's current priorities, as outlined in the Prime Minister's Mandate Letter (May 2025).

- Scientific collaboration contributes to strengthening Canada's **leadership** in the world and **diversifying Canada's trade with the world**.
- Scientific discoveries fuel **economic growth and innovation**
- Made-in-Canada discoveries contribute to Canada's **sovereignty** by reducing our dependence on other countries
- Providing stable and predictable funding for research will attract the **best talent** in the world and provide the means to retain existing talent in Canada.
- Research & Development investments contribute to **strengthening the Canadian economy**.

Brain research can help address the generational challenge Canada faces today and contribute to making a **stronger Canada**.

The Cost of Stagnation: Preventing the Erosion of Canada's Scientific Edge and Talent Exodus

Canada ranks fifth globally in percentage of papers in brain research and scholarly impact, despite much lower funding rates than the top four countries (USA, China, UK and Germany).³ However, we are underfunding our greatest advantage, creating a double loss for the Canadian economy. Over the last two decades, Canada is the only G7 nation whose R&D intensity has consistently declined, currently sitting at roughly 1.8% of GDP compared to the OECD average of 2.7% (Figure 1). This disparity makes it increasingly difficult for

¹ [Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Evaluation of the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction \(INMHA\), 2016.](#)

² [Canadian Brain Research Strategy](#)

³ [Simard, Marc-André, et al, Trends in Brain Research: A Bibliometric Analysis. *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences*, 2025, 214–24.](#)



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Canadian scientists to remain competitive and retain the talent necessary to lead in fields like AI and dementia research which is leading to a talent exodus. Canada uses taxpayer dollars to train the world's best neuroscientists, only to have them migrate to G7 peers to launch their careers, labs, and patents because domestic grant success rates (13.6%) cannot sustain them.

Research and Development Expenditure (% of GDP) - Canada, United States, World, OECD Members, China

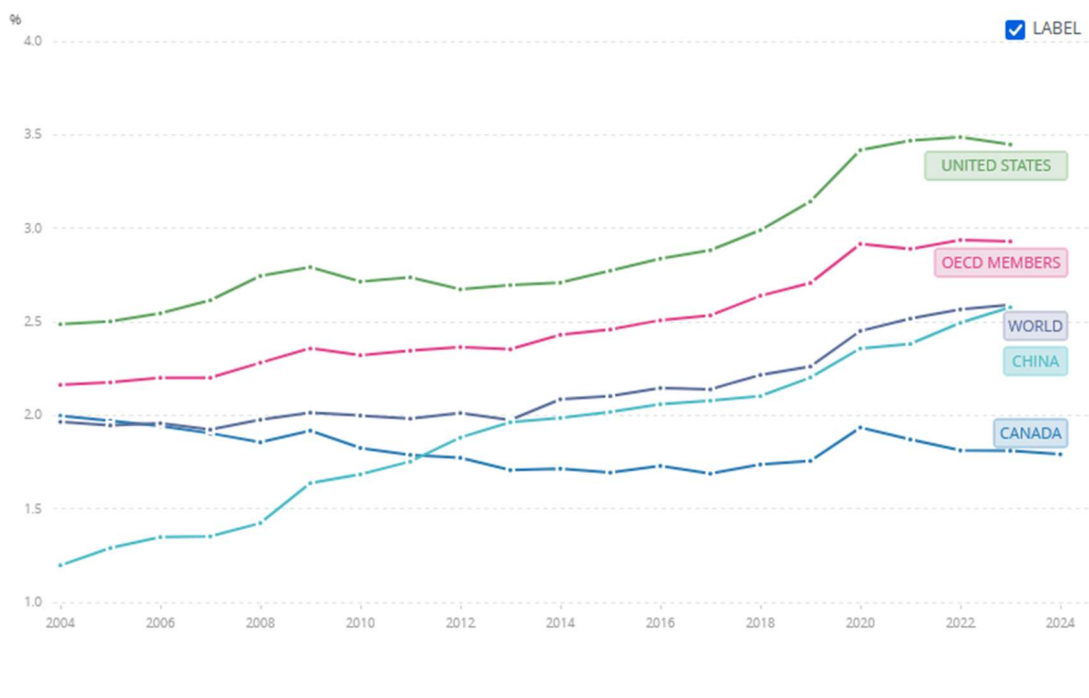


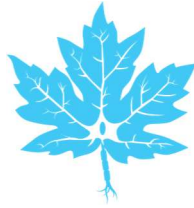
Fig. 1. Gross domestic expenditures on research and development (R&D), expressed as a percent of GDP. [World Bank Group, Research and development expenditure \(% of GDP\), 2025.](#)

Recommendation 1: Stabilizing CIHR Project Grants

While a strong, predictable base of federal research funding is essential for Canada's global competitiveness, federal support for investigator-led research has eroded, with CIHR success rates falling from roughly 25–30% in the early 2000s to approximately 13.6% today, (Figure 2)⁴. Internationally, success rates between 20% and 40% are commonplace; falling below this threshold biases funding toward safe bets over interdisciplinary research and disproportionately disadvantages early-career researchers.⁵ Restoring CIHR project grant

⁴ View the [Science funding in Canada – Statistics](#) - Webpage for data sources

⁵ [Advisory Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research, 2017.](#)



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success rates to a minimum 25% benchmark, with two competitions per year, will align Canada with international norms and stabilize the research ecosystem.

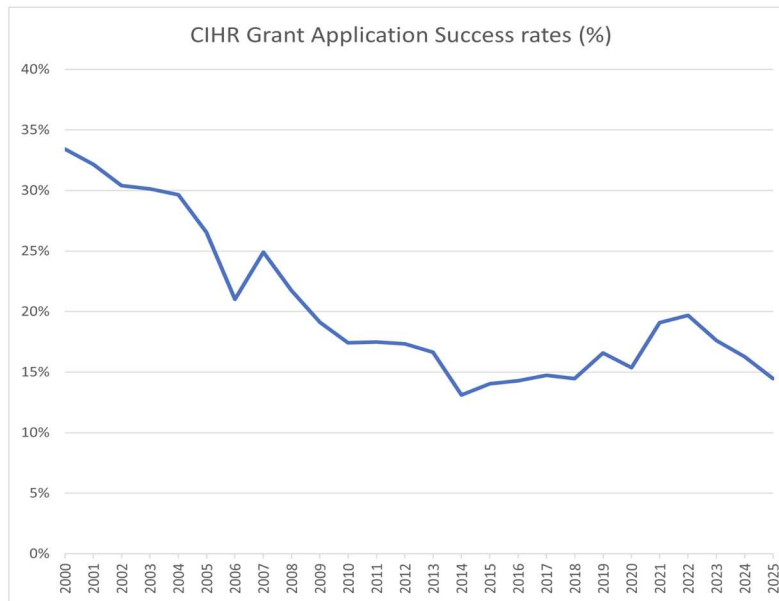


Fig. 2. [CIHR Grant application success rates 2000-2025](#)

Recommendation 2: Rebuilding Base Research Funding

Providing stable, predictable increases to the budget of the main federal funding agencies is essential to provide stability to the Canadian research ecosystem. Recent years have seen decreases in the budgets of CIHR (-5.3%) NSERC (-13.8%) and SSHRC (-8.6%) between 2020-2025, and while increases are planned for coming years, they fall short of inflation.⁶

Rebuilding stable and predictable base research funding is vital to maximizing the impact of the government's \$1.7 billion International Talent Attraction Strategy from Budget 2025; without stable core funding, recruiting top talent risks bringing more talented researchers into a system that cannot sustain it.

Recommendation 3: Neuroscience as a National Research Mission

Canada has internationally recognized strengths in neuroscience and is well-positioned to lead global discovery and innovation. Designating neuroscience as a core mission area within the federal capstone research agency announced in Budget 2024 would address the growing burden of neurological and mental health disorders nationwide. By formally designating neuroscience as a national priority, the federal government can harness our domestic expertise to secure substantial health and economic returns for all Canadians.

⁶ [Government of Canada, Infographic for Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2026.](#)



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Integrating brain science as a core mission area facilitates a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to addressing the most complex health and productivity challenges of the 21st century.

Recommendation 4: Integrating Brain Expertise into Federal Strategy

Neuroscience is not a niche clinical discipline; it is an enabling science that underpins the biological foundations of human cognition, resilience, and workforce productivity. Currently, federal strategies in areas such as artificial intelligence, defense readiness, and aging often overlook the neuroscientific expertise that could optimize these initiatives. By urging the formal inclusion of neuroscientific expertise within federal policy development and funding opportunities, the government can leverage the expertise of the Canadian neuroscience community to act as a proactive strategic partner.

Economic Growth

Brain health underpins workforce participation, and national productivity. With mental health disorders serving as a leading cause of disability and lost productivity, discovery-based research is the only viable pathway to unlocking the diagnostics and therapies needed to mitigate these costs. Domestic research ensures that intellectual property and high-value jobs remain in Canada, attracting the private capital necessary to fuel our innovation-based economy. A lack of fundamental research at home forces commercialization opportunities to migrate to international peers, resulting in a loss of sovereign assets and economic potential. As well, our student and intern trainees are vital assets for medical and high-tech companies in Canada looking to fill high-paying, competitive job opportunities.

National Resilience, Defence and Public Safety:

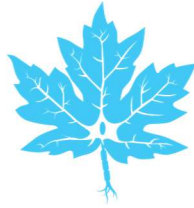
Approximately 1 in 6 Canadian Armed Forces members will experience a service-related mental health or brain-related disorder. Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and PTSD are the "invisible wounds" that cost the Canadian government billions in long-term disability claims.⁷

Neuroscience supports the health and operational readiness of Canadian veterans and first responders. Domestic research builds expertise in treating PTSD, TBI, nerve and spinal cord injury—conditions that disproportionately affect those who serve. Relying on foreign discoveries limits Canada's ability to tailor solutions to its own populations and weakens sovereign capacity in defence, performance, and human resilience. Domestic research allows for sovereign data control—ensuring that sensitive health data of our personnel remains in Canadian hands while developing personalized therapies

Health System Sustainability:

With an aging population, neurodegenerative diseases have become the leading cause of disability and the second leading cause of death worldwide. Early-stage research enables

⁷ [Veterans Affairs Canada, 2024-25 Departmental Plan, 2025.](#)



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earlier diagnosis, preventive strategies, and disease-modifying treatments. Investing in early intervention and brain health research reduces the increasing long-term costs of our healthcare system

Bridging the Translation Gap

To ensure that federal investments in basic science yield a direct return, the government must move toward a synchronized ecosystem that links federal granting councils with existing commercialization vehicles, such as the Strategic Response Fund (SRF) and Health Emergency Readiness Canada (HERC). Currently, a large gap (known as the 'Valley of Death') exists between discovery and market application, often forcing Canadian researchers to partner with foreign companies for commercialization. By creating coordinated pathways and increased funding, Canada can ensure its scientific leadership generates high-value jobs and sovereign assets domestically.

By adopting these recommendations, the Government of Canada can secure its position as a global leader in the brain economy while safeguarding the health of its citizens. Strengthening our research ecosystem is a vital investment in the intellectual capital and sovereign innovation that will drive our national prosperity. With stable, predictable funding and a strategic focus on neuroscience, we can transform the challenge of brain-related disorders into a frontier of economic opportunity. Together, we can ensure that Canadian discoveries continue to provide hope, fuel growth, and build a more resilient future for all.

About the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN)

Composed of over one thousand researchers working at academic institutions nationwide, the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) is the largest association of neuroscientists in Canada. We are dedicated to advancing neuroscience research, understanding associated disorders, and developing diagnostics and cures. Our shared goal is to ensure neuroscience remains a major strength for Canadian research and innovation, and we are committed to acting as a constructive partner to the government to improve health outcomes and drive an innovation-based, prosperous economy.

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