



**YOUR CANDIDATES
YOUR HEALTH**

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**Election
Primer**
2021



YOUR CANDIDATES, YOUR HEALTH

2021 Federal Election Primer



Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery

401-17 York St., Ottawa, ON K1N 5S7

www.rc-rc.ca | info@rc-rc.ca | 613-234-5129


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Learn more about the *Your Candidates, Your Health* campaign at yourcandidatesyourhealth.ca

“As we look to the future, Canada needs an integrated, trans-sector strategy to maximize the contribution of our health research and innovation ecosystem to Canada’s post-COVID recovery and our future health security, social wellbeing and economic prosperity,”

DR. ROSE GOLDSTEIN, MD
CHAIR OF RESEARCH CANADA
PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

“The pandemic has changed our health system. Digital tools are engaging patients in their healthcare more than ever before. An ecosystem strategy would support early and faster adoption of these tools and drive demand for made-in-Canada innovations.”

MS. DEBORAH GORDON-EL-BIHBETY
PRESIDENT AND CEO
RESEARCH CANADA

INTRODUCTION

The federal election campaign period represents one of the best times for capturing the ears of our potential future government representatives to inform and lobby them on policy matters impacting Canada’s health research and innovation enterprise. Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery has put together this 2021 Election Primer so that our Members have helpful tools they can use to approach their respective Candidates and advocate on behalf of our shared concerns – concerns that affect all Canadians. It contains **highlights** from the most recent government announcements, initiatives and investments; lists our **current challenges**; presents our **positions** and **messages**; and provides suggestions for **answers to key questions** from Candidates.

BACKGROUND

The 2021 federal election will be held on September 20, 2021. The campaign is a golden opportunity to get our message out to future Parliamentarians about the value of a robust health research and innovation ecosystem to the country and what is needed from them to sustain and promote it. The last federal election on October 21, 2019 produced a minority Liberal government, with the Conservatives continuing as the Official Opposition. The current party standings in the House of Commons are: Liberals 155 seats, Conservatives 119 seats, the Bloc Québécois 32 seats, the NDP 24 seats, Green Party 2 seats and Independent members 5 seats.

Generally speaking, political parties will likely focus on these key issues during the 2021 campaign:

Liberal

- Managing the pandemic
- Jobs and economic growth
- Affordability for the middle class
- Climate change and clean energy
- Childcare
- Indigenous reconciliation
- Status of women

Conservative

- Jobs and economic recovery
- Mental health
- Accountability and ethics
- Pandemic preparedness
- Balanced budget
- Targeting rank and file union workers

NDP

- Universal pharmacare and dental care
- Curbing inequality
- Supporting workers
- Environment and climate change
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Affordable housing

Focusing on health policy specifically:

- **Health and Wellness:** Health is currently front-of-mind for all Canadians. While the Liberal government hasn't moved on universal pharmacare, the issue of drug prices is certainly alive. Expect health to feature prominently.
- **Innovation and Science:** Vaccine development has put the benefits of investing in science front-and-centre for many. The Liberals have recently announced a biomanufacturing and life sciences strategy and the Conservatives have released initial plans to invest in the creation of a Canada Advanced Research Agency. Expect all parties to frame innovation as a means of achieving much needed economic growth.¹

¹ Hill+Knowlton Strategies. *Long-anticipated federal election underway as Trudeau asks Governor General to dissolve Parliament*. August 16, 2021

THE ACHIEVEMENTS

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 derailed many of the government's election priorities—such as national pharmacare—just a few months into its second term and quickly dominated the political priorities for all parties. In response, the Government of Canada quickly implemented a number of measures and investments to advance COVID-19 research in the fight against the virus and supported the sectors critical to the health and wellbeing of the people of Canada. In addition to numerous investments made to fund public health efforts and support Canadians and businesses throughout the pandemic, the Government of Canada invested more than \$2 billion to support Canada's research ecosystem in the fight against COVID-19. These measures include:

- ★ An initial investment of [\\$27 million in early March 2020](#) to fund coronavirus research through Canada's funding agencies—the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Genome Canada (GC)
- ★ An [additional investment of \\$275 million](#) as part of the Government's more than \$1 billion COVID-19 response fund, aimed at supporting Canadian biotech companies through the Strategic Innovation Fund COVID-19 stream, the University of Saskatchewan's VIDO-InterVac, and the National Research Council of Canada's efforts to upgrade its Human Health Therapeutics facility
- ★ [More than \\$1 billion announced in April 2020](#) to support a national medical research strategy to fight COVID-19, including:
 - ★ The establishment of the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force
 - ★ \$40 million for the Canadian COVID-19 Genomics Network (CanCOGeN), led by Genome Canada, to coordinate a COVID-19 viral and host genome sequencing effort across Canada
 - ★ \$23 million for VIDO-InterVac to accelerate development of a vaccine against COVID-19
 - ★ \$29 million for the National Research Council of Canada to begin the second phase of critical upgrades to its Human Health Therapeutics facility
 - ★ \$600 million, through the Strategic Innovation Fund, over two years to support COVID-19 vaccine and therapy clinical trials led by the private sector, and Canadian biomanufacturing opportunities
 - ★ \$10 million for a Canadian data monitoring initiative so we can coordinate and share pandemic-related data across the country
 - ★ \$10.3 million over two years, and \$5 million ongoing, to support the Canadian Immunization Research Network
 - ★ \$114.9 million through the CIHR for research projects that will accelerate the development, testing, and implementation of medical and social countermeasures to mitigate the rapid spread of COVID-19, as well as its social and health impacts

"The pandemic has reminded us of the critical importance of a strong health research and innovation ecosystem—and it has laid bare the weaknesses we must address."

DR. RYAN WILEY
POLICY ADVISOR TO
RESEARCH CANADA &
PRESIDENT, SHIFT HEALTH

- ★ [\\$450 million in funding](#) as part of the Government of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan to help Canada's academic research community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including providing wage supports and supporting universities and health research institutes to maintain essential research-related activities during the crisis
- ★ Establishment of the [COVID-19 Vaccine and COVID-19 Therapeutics Task Forces](#) to help the Government of Canada to make sound evidence-based decisions during the pandemic
- ★ An investment of [\\$173 million through the Strategic Innovation Fund](#) in Quebec City-based Medicago to support Canada's response to COVID-19 and future preparedness
- ★ Investments in [made-in-Canada vaccine, therapeutic and biomanufacturing projects and biomanufacturing facilities](#) to ensure Canada's future pandemic preparedness

Beyond pandemic-specific investments, over the past two years, the federal government also [reappointed Dr. Mona Nemer as Canada's Chief Science Advisor](#) in July 2020 and in March 2021, announced an investment of more than \$518 million through the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)'s Innovation Fund to support researchers across the country.

[Budget 2021](#), released on April 19, 2021, recognized the critical role of Canadian health research and innovation in Canada's pandemic recovery and future resilience, making strategic investments in critical areas of health research and health innovation that would strengthen Canada's resiliency and pandemic preparedness, advance health research and fuel economic growth and recovery. These included:

- ★ A total of \$345 million to the CIHR dispersed among four different funds dedicated to developing national mental health service standards, implementing a new Clinical Trials Fund, establishing a new National Institute for Women's Health Research and funding pediatric cancer research
- ★ \$400 million over six years in support of a Pan-Canadian Genomics Strategy
- ★ \$25 million over five years for additional investments in diabetes research and to work towards the development of a national framework for diabetes
- ★ \$2.2 billion over seven years to support a vibrant life sciences sector in Canada, including a new Tri-Council biomedical research fund and direct funding for VIDO-InterVac and the Stem Cell Network
- ★ \$1 billion over seven years for promising life sciences and biomanufacturing firms through the Strategic Innovation Fund
- ★ \$500 million over four years to the Canada Foundation for Innovation to assist with the infrastructure needs of post-secondary institutions and research hospitals as they continue to expand their bioscience capacity

These steps and investments signal that the government does recognize the critical role of Canadian health research and innovation in Canada's pandemic recovery and future resilience and to the health, wellbeing and economic future of all of the people of Canada. They also signal the government's recognition that public policy must be grounded in evidence and that the government has confidence in the research community to deliver that evidence. There has also been some recognition among decision-makers of the critical linkages among basic science, innovation, the economy and Canadians' wellbeing, and that federal research and innovation need a coordinated approach for collective impact.

This understanding apparently also extended to elected officials from all political parties. On May 26, 2021, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion, put forward by the Honourable Kirsty Duncan, former Minister of Science and Sport and current Deputy House Leader of the Government, to establish, in the 44th Parliament, a Standing Committee on Science and Research.

The health research and innovation ecosystem is Canada's network of postsecondary institutions, research hospitals, governments, incubators, start-ups, innovative companies, investors, health charities and patient groups, each working in collaboration to advance science and develop innovative solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of all people living in Canada.

These actions speak to the power of coordinated and collaborative advocacy on the part of the research community in Canada. Through direct lobbying, letter-writing, parliamentary events, public outreach and social media campaigns, our community faced unprecedented and difficult odds together, showing the government and the public just how much we can achieve when we flex a collaborative advocacy muscle and partner to address our health challenges. But such a coordinated approach must be supported by balanced research investments and innovation policies. The 2021 federal election provides yet another opportunity to use that coordinated voice and advance our message for a balanced investment and policy climate among Canada's future political representatives.

THE CHALLENGES

Recent re-investment commitments notwithstanding, our **health research and innovation ecosystem** is continuing to play catch-up with the rest of the world after losing considerable ground between 2006 and 2015. The COVID-19 pandemic has put additional strain on our ecosystem and shed light on the shortcomings of Canada's approach to research funding and innovation policy. Shoring up our health research and innovation ecosystem to ensure that we are able to effectively respond to future pandemics and continue to protect the health, wellbeing and economic security of all of the people of Canada depends on addressing three broad challenges:

1

CANADA'S HEALTH RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM HAS NOT YET RECOVERED FROM A DECADE OF LOW INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT.

Despite funding infusions in recent years, Canada's gross domestic spending on R&D (GERD) has continued to decline over the last 15 years.² Granting competitions continue to show low success rates—only 15% of proposals were successful in the CIHR's fall 2020 competition,³ compared to 42% in 2000.⁴ Not only does this make Canada less attractive to the world's research talent, including early-career researchers trying to establish themselves, it also puts Canada's resiliency to future pandemics in jeopardy. Fundamental science provided the building blocks for the scientific community's response to COVID-19 and enabled it to respond quickly and efficiently to the challenge. Without continual and robust investment in research, we may not be in the same position for the next pandemic.

2

WE ARE STILL RECOVERING FROM PANDEMIC-RELATED SET-BACKS.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the precarious positions of many stakeholders in the health research and innovation ecosystem. Many sectors—such as Canada's academic health science centres, postsecondary institutions, health charities and health and biosciences companies—are still experiencing significant challenges as a result of the pandemic, with much of the country's ongoing health and clinical research yet to resume over sixteen months later. Many graduate students, trainees, postdoctoral fellows (PDFs) and early-career researchers are still recovering from setbacks to their own projects due to pandemic-related lab shutdowns and funding uncertainties. Women, Indigenous people and members of other marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted.

2 Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), *Gross domestic spending on R&D (indicator)*. 2020. doi: 10.1787/d8b068b4-en

3 Canadian Institutes of Health Research. *Project Grant: Fall 2020 Results*. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52355.html>

4 Canadian Institutes of Health Research. *Success Rates in CIHR's OOGP and Project Competitions* (unpublished). 2018.

3

CANADA'S APPROACH TO HEALTH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION LACKS AN ECOSYSTEM LENS.

When government takes an inconsistent and siloed approach to policymaking, strides and investments made in one area can be quickly set back or cancelled out by counteracting policies in another. But, it is not just the policies themselves that often fail to take an ecosystem perspective, but the policy discourse surrounding them as well. Leaders within Canada's health research and innovation ecosystem are concerned that recent discourse pertaining to the biopharmaceutical industry has polarized debate, eroded trust and distracted us from the bigger picture of ensuring that a vibrant health research and innovation ecosystem—a cornerstone of our post-pandemic future—must be an inclusive one.

OUR POSITIONS

The pandemic has shown that our health research and innovation ecosystem is capable of remarkable speed, productivity and impact when we work collaboratively towards a common goal. It has also underscored how reliant our health security, social wellbeing and economic prosperity are on a fully-supported, future-ready ecosystem, and the potential risks of neglect. This is why we are calling for a whole-of-government strategy for the health research and innovation ecosystem, which will support the unique and essential roles contributed by each stakeholder. This strategy must be long-term, measurable, with concrete goals and targets, engage all ecosystem stakeholders in its development, including the public, and will expect and encourage **trans-sector partnerships** as a crucial mechanism for its success. Bold and transformative, versus incremental, change is required through the deliberate alignment of government priorities, policies, programs and investments across ministries to maximize the impact and potential of the health research and innovation ecosystem for all people living in Canada

Against this backdrop, Research Canada has developed the position that **we need a health research and innovation ecosystem strategy that includes:**

1

BOLSTERED INVESTMENT IN FUNDAMENTAL SCIENCE THROUGH THE TRI-COUNCIL.

Fundamental science is the non-negotiable starting point for any health research achievement, innovation or commercialization. It has provided the building blocks for the scientific community's response to COVID-19, producing life-changing vaccines and treatments in record time, allowing individuals and economies to regain their footing. Fundamental science research underpins the knowledge-based workforce and talent pool and sustains the bioeconomy, with material economic benefits; R&D investment by private industry, fed by basic science discovery, yields an average 30 percent return.⁵

Yet, notwithstanding Canada's more recent re-investment commitments, the longer-term trend sees Canada falling further behind its global peers, making the country less attractive to the world's research talent and harder to work in for

Trans-sector partnerships are collaborations of individuals or organizations across academia, care providers, government, not-for-profit organizations, private sector, patients and the public that bring together diverse and necessary knowledge, perspectives and resources to undertake high-impact research, translate knowledge and innovations into impact, and realize the full health, social and economic potential of our health research and innovation ecosystem.

⁵ Advisory Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science. *Investing in Canada's Future*. 2017. P. 2

early-career researchers trying to establish themselves. The Biden administration in the United States (US) recently proposed an investment of \$250 billion USD in science, research and innovation. Canada has yet to see a comparable commitment. We consistently trail our G7 partners in spending on R&D as a percentage of GDP.⁶ The federal government must provide predictable, sustainable and robust project-oriented funding via the Tri-Council's Project Grant Programs to attract, retain and unleash the creativity of the researchers we need to generate the discoveries that fuel our innovation pipeline. The funding models used must also recognize today's research reality by supporting and encouraging interdisciplinary research, trans-sector partnerships and global collaboration, which are best suited to the challenges and opportunities we face now and in the future.

2

SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE, HIGHLY-QUALIFIED RESEARCH PERSONNEL.

Health research discoveries are supported through the research assistance of graduate students, trainees and postdoctoral fellows (PDFs) who are our future public and private R&D leaders and personnel. Many are still recovering from setbacks to their own projects due to pandemic-related lab shutdowns and funding uncertainties. Women, Indigenous people and members of other marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted. Without all these members of the research workforce, fundamental science activities informed by the full spectrum of realities and needs across Canada's diverse population cannot take place. Investments such as the last federal budget's announcement of \$750 million to Mitacs are valuable supports for these young researchers, but do not replace direct awards. We urge the federal government to fulfill the 2017 Fundamental Science Review's investment recommendations for doctoral students, trainees and PDFs, building on its 2019 commitment to \$114 million over five years for graduate student awards. We also encourage the federal government to use its leadership to guide research institutions in effective ways to develop equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), and accessibility for the personnel they employ. The federal government's Dimensions program for postsecondary institutions is a wonderful start towards fostering increased EDI. Similar leadership to guide even more of our research institutions around how to achieve EDI and accessibility goals would be welcome.

3

SUPPORT FOR ECOSYSTEM SECTORS THAT HAVE FACED SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES DUE TO THE PANDEMIC.

Academic health science centres (AHSCs) – AHSCs host many fundamental science discoveries and are where their applications, such as vaccines and therapeutics, are clinically trialed. As AHSCs, Canada's leading research hospitals account for nearly \$3 billion of the country's biomedical sciences research activity, employing more than 60,000 highly skilled researchers and staff.⁷ However, the pandemic has destabilized these centres, with pre-existing health research halted to create capacity for work on COVID-19. Much of this research is still struggling to resume, with impacts for individuals waiting for lifesaving and novel therapeutics and a related financial loss due to the pullout of private industry partners. A coordinated, national approach to research funding and support for these institutions must be part of a health research and innovation ecosystem strategy, recognizing their vital yet precarious position as sites for discovery, skill development, partnership and innovation.

Health charities – Philanthropy and fundraising all but disappeared during the pandemic as people across the country faced their own economic struggles. The existential threat for health charities, which are major sources of funding for health research, had a downstream negative impact on the AHSCs that conduct this work. As health research partners and leading representatives for the patient voice, the challenges that health charities continue to face in the recovery phase threaten to compromise the public legitimacy and relevance of our research ecosystem. A comprehensive health research and innovation

6 Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), *Gross domestic spending on R&D (indicator)*. 2020. doi: 10.1787/d8b068b4-en

7 HealthCareCAN. Independently-supplied information based on informal member survey. 2016.

ecosystem strategy must recognize health charities as an integral component of that continuum, with impacts on other stakeholders.

Post-secondary institutions – Universities and colleges are essential members of the health research and innovation ecosystem by inspiring, educating and training the next generation of scientists and research assistants employed throughout the continuum. An ecosystem strategy will include support to this sector for: international student recruitment and retention; labour force access to upskilling and reskilling; research and knowledge mobilization; green, digital and accessible infrastructure; and innovative approaches to teaching and learning that reflect our pandemic recovery reality.

Health and biosciences sector – The biopharmaceutical, biotech and medical devices industries are irreplaceable in a functional health research and innovation ecosystem. They contribute to basic and applied biomedical research at universities and institutes; help AHSCs drive drug discovery and enhance clinical services to improve patient outcomes; boost the success of homegrown Canadian enterprises by fuelling the innovation pipeline; and are an important developer of Canadian life science research talent. More than 900 firms, employing more than 91,000 people are translating and commercializing our basic science discoveries into solutions for Canada and the world.⁸ A health research and innovation strategy for 21st century Canada must move beyond a view of these companies as simply vendors and producers to a model that treats them as true partners in health system development and sustainability. The work of the 2018 Health Biosciences Economic Strategy Table is a foundation on which the federal government can build. Our more recent expert advisory [report](#), specific to the biopharmaceuticals industry, also offers important considerations for optimizing the entire sector's contribution to Canada's health research and innovation ecosystem.

4

AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENABLES TRANS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS.

Trans-sector partnerships have driven rapid vaccine development and scale-up during the pandemic, such as Moderna working with the National Institutes of Health in the US, and AstraZeneca working with the University of Oxford. The Canadian COVID Genomics Network (CanCOGeN) is a consortium of public health authorities, academia, industry, hospitals, research institutes and large-scale genomic sequencing centres dedicated to better understanding the disease, informing decision-making and building Canada's capacity to address future pandemics.⁹ It is one example of Canada's potential for productive trans-sector partnerships, yet longer-standing weaknesses in creating such partnerships—especially those involving industry—due to siloed thinking, have compromised the ecosystem's competitiveness and ability to deliver innovations to patients. The federal government must design a policy and investment environment where such partnerships are the expectation, not the exception.

5

INVESTMENT IN THE DIGITALIZATION OF OUR HEALTH SYSTEM.

The pandemic has demonstrated the critical need for robust, secure, connected and interoperable health data that can accurately inform decision-making, enhance threat surveillance, educate the public and help health leaders gain the upper hand in a crisis. It has also highlighted the power of data to drive science and innovation. Demand for digital tools has accelerated, with potential to engage patients more fully in their care while improving access to quality health care and innovations for all people living in Canada. This, however, is tempered by a lack of end user involvement in these tools' design, signalling even more opportunity if this challenge is met.¹⁰

8 Canada's Economic Strategy Tables: Health and Biosciences. *The Innovation and Competitiveness Imperative: Seizing Opportunities for Growth*. 2018. PP. 3, 19.

9 Report of Research Canada's Expert Advisory Panel. 2021. P. 22

10 Birnbaum, Faith et al. "Patient engagement and the design of digital health." *Academic emergency medicine: official journal of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine* vol. 22,6 (2015): 754-6. doi:10.1111/acem.12692

An effective health research and innovation ecosystem strategy will recognize the economic opportunity inherent in digitalizing Canada's health system. Globally, this market was expected to reach \$233 billion in value last year.¹¹ Data analytic processes could also save Canadian healthcare at least \$10 billion annually¹² and boost the system's productivity by an estimated \$408 million through the adoption of virtual healthcare as a standard offering.¹³

Reinvestments in digitalized health will nourish multiple aspects of the health research and innovation ecosystem, melding health knowledge with commercial application, feeding back better information for researchers to work with as they choose and pursue their next avenues of inquiry. Given what we have witnessed during the pandemic about the tremendous value of a public that is both informed about and engaged with the discourse around health research, innovation and tools, reinvestment in digitalized health can only serve to advance Canada's collective health security through better decisions and care, while propelling its economic prosperity forward.

ADVOCACY MESSAGES

The following advocacy messages are intended to summarize our positions succinctly to aspiring government representatives when it comes to research and innovation policy:

- ✓ Canada's post-pandemic recovery and future pandemic preparedness depend on having a robust health research and innovation ecosystem that recognizes the unique and essential roles contributed by each stakeholder, and expects and enables trans-sector partnerships between and among stakeholders.
- ✓ The pandemic has shown that our health research and innovation ecosystem is capable of remarkable speed, productivity and impact when we work collaboratively towards a common goal. Canada needs a whole-of-government approach to health research and innovation policy and investment that reflects and supports the collaborative nature of our ecosystem.
- ✓ Recent reinvestments into Canadian research and innovation have been welcome and much needed, but Canada remains significantly outpaced internationally and there is much more to do to catch up and lead. Canada must stay focused and continue to invest in fundamental science through the Tri-Council.
- ✓ We encourage government leaders and representatives to continue to promote research and innovation initiatives that address the needs and ambitions of diverse, highly-qualified research personnel, including the next generation, Indigenous Peoples, women, racialized communities and those of diverse abilities.
- ✓ The pandemic has demonstrated the critical need—and demand—for robust health data that can accurately inform decision-making, enhance threat surveillance, educate the public and help health leaders gain the upper hand in a crisis, and for digital health tools that can engage patients.

11 Canada's Economic Strategy Tables: Health and Biosciences. *The Innovation and Competitiveness Imperative: Seizing Opportunities for Growth*. 2018. P. 19.

12 Canada Health Infoway. *Big Data Analytics in Health – White Paper*. 2013. P. 25.

13 Canada Health Infoway. *Mobile Health Computing between Physicians and Patients –White Paper*. 2014. P. 30.

QUESTIONS TO FEDERAL CANDIDATES AND ANSWERS FOR ADVOCATES

Q

POLICY QUESTIONS FOR FEDERAL CANDIDATES

- Does your party support increased investments in the Tri-Council agencies' (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) budgets to advance health research?
- Does your party support increased investments to support the next generation of health researchers and innovators—graduate students, trainees and postdoctoral fellows—including young Indigenous and racialized scholars?
- Does your party support increased investments and the development of policies that advance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in Canadian health research and innovation?
- Does your party support targeted investments to those sectors that have faced significant challenges due to the pandemic—academic health science centres, health charities, post-secondary institutions and the health and biosciences sector?
- Does your party support increased investments and the development of policies that support an enabling environment for trans-sector partnerships?
- Does your party support investments to help digitalize our health system?
- If your party is elected, will you form a government that signals Canada is a science and innovation nation?

A

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

Why should I be concerned about health research when my constituents are more worried about the economy and healthcare?

The pandemic has shown just how critical health research is to our economic and health security. In just one year, four different COVID-19 vaccines were approved by Health Canada—far sooner than the likely 10-year timeline predicted by many experts early in the pandemic—and much of the country is now reopened. Future pandemics and infectious disease outbreaks are inevitable, and reinvesting in health research now is the key to our future preparedness.

Health research was already tackling some of this country's greatest health and health system challenges before the pandemic. Health research provides us with the evidence we require to decrease wait times and provide better access to health services and treatment. We cannot improve our health system without the knowledge we acquire from research that allows us to make informed decisions about new interventions and innovative system strategies. This evidence can only come from research that is rigorous, integrated and based on fact. Research helps to ensure a health system that is adaptable, responsive, innovative, cost-effective and accountable. It also contributes to economic efficiency by identifying practices and interventions which are not adding value and should be discontinued.

How can your organization ask for an increase in public investment in health research when there has been a substantial increase in your sector over the past several years and significant investments made during the course of the pandemic? What about other priorities for government?

Canada has made a significant commitment to health research over a decade and a half. The health research community sincerely appreciates the substantial investments made in recent years, as well as the investments made in Canadian health research and innovation as part of the country's response to COVID-19. As encouraged as we are, Research Canada remains concerned about the impact of previous underinvestment on our next generation of fundamental science research and on our ecosystem's capacity to respond effectively to future health crises. The health research and innovation communities want to make sure that the full potential of these investments to propel Canada forward through an extraordinarily competitive global market is realized, rather than merely stabilizing the status quo.

Where do Canadians stand on the money being spent on health research?

Canadians have not wavered in their commitment to the importance of supporting health and medical research because they recognize the benefits it can bring to our health and to our economy. Canadians are increasingly convinced that Canada should be a global leader in health and medical research, according to a survey on health research and health innovation released in the spring of 2019 by six leading national health organizations.¹⁴ A majority of Canadians say they are still willing to pay out of pocket to support health and medical research and to pay more taxes for Canadian-made health science innovations and technologies. In 2021, Canadians are still more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increased funding for health and medical research.

The survey, *CanadaSpeaks! 2019* updates the results from landmark surveys in 2006, 2009 and 2015.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



In 2021, an overwhelming majority of Canadians (86%) are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increased funding for health and medical research, a rate of support consistent with both 2019 (86%) and 2015 (84%).



Canadians are increasingly convinced that Canada and their province should be global leaders in health and medical research (91% of Canadians say Canada should be a global leader in health research while 86% say that their province should be a national leader).



91% of Canadians say that health and medical research makes an important contribution to the healthcare system while 81% of Canadians say that health and medical research makes an important contribution to the economy.



9 out of 10 Canadians agree that basic research is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.



6 out of 10 Canadians are willing to pay out of pocket for new health and medical research projects and would be willing to pay \$1 more a week in taxes if they knew the revenues would pay for government investment in Canadian-made health science innovations and technologies.

¹⁴ The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, the Health Charities Coalition of Canada, HealthCareCAN, Innovative Medicines Canada, Medtech Canada and Research Canada

Why should I make health research and health innovation my priorities?

The benefits of health research are the priorities of Canadians: improved health, an efficient and sustainable health system and a prosperous economy that creates jobs. Canadians hold their healthcare system near and dear to their hearts. Health research will be critical to facing the most pressing challenges we are currently facing in our healthcare system.

HEALTH RESEARCH

- Provides the evidence that facilitates sound decision-making and provides governments with the information required to develop sound public policy
- Provides the healthcare system with the tools it needs to effectively diagnose and treat Canadians when they become ill
- Provides the means to test the effectiveness of new treatments; first in controlled environments, through clinical trials, then in actual use, through ongoing surveillance
- Supports the development of the most efficacious and cost-effective means of delivering healthcare services to Canadians

The return on Canada's investment in health research is measured not only in terms of health, but also in terms of wealth.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S INVESTMENT IN HEALTH RESEARCH IS UNDERPINNING THE INNOVATION AGENDA BY:

- Providing the foundation for spin-off companies that supply important health services and products to Canadians while generating economic growth and creating jobs
- Fostering partnerships with the health and biosciences and voluntary sectors that are leveraging the federal investment, integrating all partners into the development and implementation of strategic agendas for health research and maximizing the impact of health research dollars
- Providing Canada with skilled graduates who are equipped with advanced levels of training, knowledge and expertise
- Repatriating Canadian researchers from abroad and attracting distinguished foreign researchers to Canada, where their discoveries will benefit Canadians
- Creating a brighter future for Canada's youth, Indigenous Peoples and women by providing opportunities to harness their energy and creativity in becoming the next generation of health researchers

CONCLUSION

The investments made in recent years prove that collaborative advocacy on the part of the health research and innovation communities works. But we know we have further to go. **Using this Primer and the accompanying resources for successful advocacy, our Members will be part of an ongoing movement to ensure that Canada is set on a course to becoming a leading science and innovation nation, which is prepared to deal with whatever health crises may come.** Together, we can help our next Parliament begin with a better understanding of the integrated connections, interdependencies and multi-sector alliances that empower our ecosystem to advance research and develop innovative health solutions.



About Research Canada:

Research Canada is a national alliance dedicated to advancing health research and health innovation through collaborative advocacy. Our mission is to improve the health and prosperity of all Canadians by championing Canada's global leadership in health research and innovation.

Thank you

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AstraZeneca is a global, innovation-driven biopharmaceutical business with a primary focus on the discovery, development and commercialization of primary and specialty care medicines that transform lives. Our primary focus is on three important areas of healthcare: Cardiovascular and Metabolic disease; Oncology; and Respiratory, Inflammation and Autoimmunity. For more information: www.astrazeneca.ca.



Canadian
Frailty
Network

Réseau canadien
des soins aux
personnes fragilisées

Canadian Frailty Network (CFN) is Canada's sole network devoted to improving care for older Canadians living with frailty and supporting their families and caregivers. We do this by increasing frailty recognition and assessment, increasing evidence for decision-making, advancing evidence-based changes to care, training the next generation of care professionals and scientists, catalyzing change in Canada's health and social care systems, and always engaging with older adults and their families and caregivers.

INNOVATIVE
MEDICINES
CANADA



MÉDICAMENTS
NOVATEURS
CANADA

Innovative Medicines Canada is the national voice of Canada's innovative pharmaceutical industry. We advocate for policies that enable the discovery, development and commercialization of innovative medicines and vaccines that improve the lives of all Canadians. We support our members' commitment to being valued partners in the Canadian healthcare system.



INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
La Société Pour Les Troubles de L'Humeur du Canada

