

September 29, 2016



The Honourable Kirsty Duncan
Minister of Science
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Dr. David Naylor
Chair, Canada's Fundamental Science Review
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Dear Minister Duncan and Dr. Naylor:



We are writing to you regarding the federal government's Fundamental Science Review.



We commend Minister Duncan for launching this review of federal funding for fundamental science. We are of the view that the Fundamental Science Review is an essential step in ensuring Canada improves its place as a global leader in research and innovation.



We would also like to thank the Federal Government for its commitment to research and innovation clearly demonstrated in the 2016 Federal Budget; namely its investment of \$95M in additional and ongoing monies per year to the federal granting councils as well as \$237M to Genome Canada. We applaud the commitment of \$800M over four years to strengthen Innovation Networks and Clusters in Canada and for the Government's commitment of \$2B to the strategic investment fund. In addition, we thank the Federal Government for its investment of almost \$900M awarded to projects as a part of the CFREF.



Together, seven of our organizations represent the full spectrum of health, health care and life science research and development, from fundamental research, through clinical trials, through to applied research and commercialization of health care products, services and technologies. Research Canada, in addition, as an alliance of academic, private and voluntary stakeholders, itself, represents the full health innovation continuum.



On August 31st, 2016, our organizations met to discuss common messages to some of the ongoing federal government consultations. We are united in the view that Canada has a strong foundation in health and life science research — a foundation supported by world-class researchers, strong academic institutions and important health and life science clusters across the country. However, we also believe Canada can and must do more to improve its global competitiveness through strategic investment in the research continuum, including building greater capacity in our specific areas of research strength, from basic to applied research.

While our organizations will respond individually to the call for input on the Fundamental Science Review and other federal consultations currently underway, we welcome this opportunity to share the common themes we identified at our August 31st meeting.

First, Canada must ensure there are sufficient and appropriate funding mechanisms to support discovery research at levels that will sustain our international competitiveness and will ensure a critical level of activity in key research areas. Today, most discovery research takes place in academic institutions, with researchers depending on government programs for support. If Canada is to be a global leader in discovery research, we must **restore funding to internationally competitive levels.**

Similarly, we must also **ensure a coherent and balanced approach to funding the full spectrum of health research.** This includes basic research, multi-disciplinary and applied research involving partners in all sectors to support health system innovation, service delivery improvement, and new technologies for healthcare delivery and system integration. We must ensure that programs are explicitly available for translational research projects which bridge the gap between fundamental research and commercialization and which support community research needs.

We must also **ensure better coordination among research funders.** Across Canada there are a number of funding programs available to researchers and their partners. We would encourage a strategic review of these programs and how they relate to each other, in support of overall simplification and better coordination of communication, funding criteria and application processes across all funding agencies, with the goal of ensuring programs are accessible and complimentary. We must also recognize that the type of research being undertaken, and the context of that research, is evolving. Funding programs must include support for inter-disciplinary research projects that sit at the junction of health, engineering and social sciences and, with that, do not currently fit the funding criteria of any of Canada's three federal granting agencies.

As part of this review, we would also encourage you to consider how funding and/or funding mechanisms can help better support early career researchers. We are concerned by data from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Association of Canadian Early Career Health Researchers, that suggest grants to young researchers are declining. To sustain our research capacity into the future, it is critical that we **introduce mechanisms to support and develop Canada’s young research community** today.

It is also **critical that funding decisions be timely**. The current review process for health and life science research is slow, affecting Canada’s ability to participate in a number of research scenarios including projects with international partners, projects with matching industry funding and research projects responding to time-sensitive issues (e.g. pandemic research). Though there have been some examples of this, we must ensure that funding streams specifically designed to provide a rapid turnaround are permanently in place for some types of projects.

Finally, there is a need to **ensure federal funding agencies collectively recognize the full costs of research to achieve a balanced approach to investments**. This includes an integrated approach to research and infrastructure funding — research cannot take place without the tools and equipment required to test the ideas and designs — as well as core funding support for research management.

Health and life science research is unique. It examines the impact of new medicines, technologies and processes on the human body, as well as the system as whole and healthcare delivery. This research is complex, lengthy and involves a high rate of trial and error to succeed. It also involves human subjects. When successful, however; products have broad impacts that include individual patients, society and the economy. A government that invests in health and life science research is investing in the future of its citizens.

Beyond the Fundamental Science Review, our organizations are also aligned in our view that the health and life science sector is a critical component of Canada’s innovation potential. In 2012, the Council of Canadian Academies identified Health & Related Life Sciences and Technologies as one of four major areas where Canada demonstrates particular strength in science and technology. With that, health and life sciences should be a priority sector under the federal government’s Innovation Agenda, and we would encourage you to position recommendations from the Fundamental Science Review in the context of the country’s overall innovation objectives.

We thank you for this opportunity to share our views. As you continue this important review, we ask that you consider involving our organizations in reviewing, discussing and prioritizing the recommendations you receive during the process itself. As representatives and stewards of the Canada's health and life sciences research sector, we would be pleased to meet with you and to host a roundtable discussion to consider how best to support fundamental health and life science research in Canada.

Sincerely,



Dr. Geneviève Moineau,
President and CEO
Association of Faculties of Medicine Canada



Ms. Connie Côté,
Executive Director
Health Charities Coalition of Canada



Mr. Andrew Casey,
President and CEO
BIOTEC Canada



Ms. Elaine Campbell, Interim President
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Ms. Denise Amyot,
President and CEO
Colleges and Institutes Canada



Mr. Brian Lewis,
President and CEO
MEDEC



Mr. Bill Tholl,
President and CEO
HealthCareCAN



Ms. Deborah Gordon-El-Bihbety,
President and CEO
Research Canada

Association of Faculties of Medicine Canada

The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) represents the country's 17 faculties of medicine and is the national voice for academic medicine. Our organization was founded in 1943 with a mandate to individually and collectively support Canada's medical schools through promotion of medical education, research, and clinical care.

BIOTECanada

BIOTECanada is the national industry association with more than 200 members located nationwide, reflecting the diverse nature of Canada's health, industrial and agricultural biotechnology sectors. In addition to providing significant health benefits for Canadians, the biotechnology industry has quickly become an essential part of the transformation of many traditional cornerstones of the Canadian economy including manufacturing, automotive, energy, aerospace and forestry industries.

Colleges and Institutes Canada

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is the national not-for-profit membership association of Canada's publicly-funded colleges, institutes, cégeps and polytechnics. Known previously as the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), CICan and its members are committed to driving Canadian prosperity by being global leaders in applied education and partnered innovation.

HealthCareCAN

HealthCareCAN is the national voice of healthcare organizations across Canada. We foster informed and continuous, results oriented discovery and innovation across the continuum of healthcare. We act with others to enhance the health of the people of Canada; to build the capability for high quality care; and to help ensure value for money in publicly financed, healthcare programs.

Health Charities Coalition of Canada

The Health Charities Coalition of Canada (HCCC) is a member-based organization comprised of 30 national health charities and patient groups who represent the voice of patients at all levels of the health continuum. A full list of our members can be found on our website at www.healthcharities.ca. Our mission is to facilitate the collaboration of Canada's health charities to achieve excellence in health policy, practice and research.

Innovative Medicine 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.

MEDEC

MEDEC is the national association created by and for the Canadian medical technology industry. MEDEC is the primary source for advocacy, information and education on the medical technology industry for members, the greater healthcare community, industry partners and the general public. Our goals are to advance health outcomes for patients in Canada and the growth and vibrancy of the industry in Canada. We focus on ensuring access to proven, safe technology and new, innovative medical technology developed by our member companies.

Research Canada

Research Canada is a national, broad-based alliance dedicated to increasing investments in health research through collaborative advocacy. We believe health research is a shared benefit, shared responsibility and an investment in Canada's future. We engage government, academia, industry and nonprofit sectors to build support for balanced and long-term health research funding – investments that strengthen Canada's innovation system and lead to better health, sustainable health care, new commercialization opportunities, and skilled jobs for Canadians.