



CAN-ACN

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR NEUROSCIENCE
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES NEUROSCIENCES

Dear Members of the Parliament,

We are very happy to be here today to meet you. We are here as representatives of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN), which is the largest organization of neuroscientists in Canada dedicated to the promotion of all fields of brain research. Our association counts approximately one thousand members, all active researchers at academic institutions across the country, with a common goal to ensure that Canadian neuroscience research remains one of the greatest research strengths of this country.

Neuroscience research impacts all Canadians. One in three Canadians will be affected by a neurological disorder, injury or psychiatric disease in their lifetime. For the vast majority of the over thousands of conditions that can affect the nervous system, no clear causes or cures are known. Health Canada has estimated the economic burden of neurological and psychiatric conditions to represent 14% of the total burden of disease in this country, which is more than cardiovascular disease or cancer. Neuroscience research aims to reveal the fundamental building blocks of nervous system, how it functions, and the biological bases of neurological and psychiatric diseases. Through this work, neuroscientists are discovering and developing novel treatments for debilitating ailments affecting the brain,

Discoveries made by Canadian researchers also have immediate impact in the lives of patients. Just last November, Dr. Todd Mainprize used ultrasound to break the blood brain barrier and deliver chemotherapeutic agents inside the brain of a patient whose tumour was growing quickly and had turned malignant. The technique used was first developed by investigators with animal models, and funded by the Canadian government. Examples such as this one show that research is an important investment.

It is clear by its actions that the 29th Ministry of Canada is committed to supporting research. We applaud the creation of the Science minister position, the directives to ensure that federal science is freely communicated to the public, and the statements that the government values scientists and will base decisions on sound scientific knowledge. We also welcome the government's intention to create a new Office of the Chief Scientist. We are very excited to see these changes and are looking forward to the renewal of the relationship of Canada's government with one of the country's greatest strengths, its scientific community.

We are here to open a dialogue with the government to discuss the future of neuroscience research in Canada and the hope we can build a new strategy for funding Brain Health in Canada. A critical issue has been the chronic underfunding of basic research in Canada, which is the engine that drives innovation. In the last decade, our members' chances of securing funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for the operation of their laboratories have fallen from 33% to 10%. This has led to lab closures, as several of our successful colleagues have chosen to continue their work abroad.

Building laboratories and developing successful research projects takes decades, but they can easily be destroyed by few years of uncertain and dwindling financial support. We are optimistic that these issues can be resolved by decisive action by a government committed to supporting science and scientists.

Most sincerely,

Douglas P. Munoz, Ph.D.
President

Katalin Toth, Ph.D.
Chair of the Advocacy Committee

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