



Monday, May 31, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

**Subject: Continued investment in fundamental science is necessary to ensure Canada's post-COVID economic recovery, future health security and global competitiveness**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of **Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery**, we would like to thank you and the Government of Canada for the recent investments made towards Canadian health research and innovation in Budget 2021. These investments—and the investments made during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic—have sent a clear signal to our community that the Government of Canada recognizes the critical importance of health research and innovation to our post-COVID recovery and our future economic and health prosperity.

At the same time, we believe that Budget 2021 was a missed opportunity to invest in fundamental science through the Tri-Council's Project Grant Programs. As the pandemic has shown us, health research and the people who conduct it are integral to our ability to protect and improve the health and well-being of all of the people of Canada, both in relation to pandemics like our current one and the myriad of health concerns that we continue to face every day across the country.

Fundamental science provided the building blocks for the scientific community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and was the foundation for the rapid development of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines to combat the virus. Canada's—and the world's—quick response to the emergence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, was made possible by many years of fundamental research, particularly following the 2002-2004 SARS outbreak when Canada aggressively pursued research into the respiratory disease. The foundation of knowledge enabled scientists to rapidly develop diagnostic, therapeutic and preventative measures to combat COVID-19, leading to where we are now—just 14 months following the World Health Organization's declaration of a global pandemic, over half of all Canadians have now received at least one dose of one of the four vaccines approved in Canada.

We cannot take our scientific competitiveness—both for global talent and for global partnership—for granted. As governments around the world dramatically enrich investments in fundamental science, Canada's relative standing faces the risk of erosion. The Biden administration in the U.S., for example, recently proposed an investment of US\$250 billion in science, research and innovation; Canada has yet

to see a comparable commitment to research and innovation. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada has consistently trailed other G7 countries in gross domestic spending on R&D, and this has continued to steadily fall over the past two decades when all other G7 countries have increased their R&D spending.

Investment in fundamental science is also critical to maximizing the health research and innovation ecosystem's contribution to economic growth and prosperity. It is the innovation makers, not the takers, who generate the greatest impact—attracting talent, creating homegrown enterprises, hiring domestic talent—and being a maker begins with fundamental science. Researchers and clinicians at all career stages are integral to the health research workforce, and these people rely on investments in fundamental science to support their top-flight research projects and, in the case of early-career researchers—including graduate students, trainees and post-doctoral fellows—to support their career- and skills-development as the highly qualified personnel necessary for Canada's knowledge economy.

While recent investments like the \$750 million to Mitacs included in the latest federal budget will go a long way to supporting these young researchers, they are not able to fill some of the biggest gaps in Canada's health research and innovation ecosystem—like direct research and salary support for young, early career scientists—that make Canada a less attractive country for developing careers in research and innovation. Investing in fundamental science through the Tri-Council's Project Grant Programs can help to fill this gap and accelerate the innovative health research that is critical to Canada's economic and health security. Similarly, [the Banting Research Foundation has](#) “proposed creating a discovery-investigator program on par with our global competitors for Canada's most-talented young scientists who can contribute to the fields of health and biomedicine.”

COVID-19 has showcased the strength of Canada's health research and innovation ecosystem and the vital role it will play as our nation seeks to restart—and grow—our economy. While the Government's recent investments in Canada's life sciences and bio-manufacturing sector are absolutely important and necessary, we must also remember to invest in the fundamental science and people that generate world-class knowledge and discoveries that are necessary to creating homegrown life sciences enterprises.

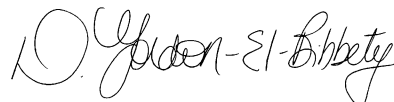
Sincerely,



Rose Goldstein, MD  
Chair



Ryan Wiley, PhD  
Policy Advisor



Deborah Gordon-El-Bihbey  
President and CEO

cc. The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health  
The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry  
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
Dr. Mona Nemer, Chief Science Advisor