

National Alliance of Provincial Health Research Organizations (NAPHRO)

Understanding and Communicating the Value of Research:

Research is progress, research is hope, research is an investment

The critical role of provincial health research organizations

September 2025

Amplifying the value of research in our dynamic context

The Canadian context related to research is dynamic and shifting presenting both opportunities and challenges for Canada. Canada's new federal government is grappling with significant, unprecedented national and international priorities. For example, changes in the U.S. approach to tariffs is elevating Canada's desire to create a more resilient economy less vulnerable to international changes. In this context, strengthening Canada's competitiveness in the life sciences and biomanufacturing sector is a top priority. Similar shifts are occurring at the provincial level. In response to economic pressures and new policy directions some provinces are shifting the purpose, scope and scale of investments favouring support for the implementation of research for economic benefit (e.g., commercialization) over basic discovery.

Adding to the complexity of the current context is the undercurrent of changes to public perception of and belief in science. Nationally and internationally skepticism towards science is growing. In the U.S., this is compounded by changes in policy directed towards research focused on equity, diversity and inclusion. One byproduct of the current environment is the unprecedented number of U.S. researchers considering leaving the country for Canada and Europe requiring these jurisdictions to rapidly develop ways to support and retain this new-found talent while also addressing local needs and pressures.

The current environment runs the risk of disinvestment in research provincially, nationally and internationally. This could result in significant disruption to future innovation and economic development as reduced resources would result in fewer people entering training for and careers focused on research and development. Therefore, it is timely and important to bolster efforts to build foundational understanding and awareness about the fundamental value of sustained investments in research to improving health, social, and economic outcomes for all Canadians. The organizations that make up the National Alliance of Provincial Health Research Organizations (NAPHRO), a one-of-a-kind alliance in Canada, play a unique and instrumental role in supporting these investments. As an authoritative, steadfast voice in the Canadian research ecosystem, NAPHRO is contributing to national dialogue about the value of research in these unprecedented times and showcasing the role and importance of provincial research organizations and investments in supporting and catalyzing this value.

The role of provincial research funding organizations in Canada's research and innovation ecosystem

[NAPHRO members](#) are provincially mandated research organizations that came together as an alliance about 20 years ago to facilitate strategic convergence in health research funding across Canada, and engage in inter-provincial and national dialogue, partnerships, and collaborations to help inform their decisions and share best

practices in areas such as research impact analysis and science communication. While health research is still a primary focus, several NAPHRO members have undergone changes to their mission and scope to also include health innovation, and cross-sector research and innovation more generally.

Provincial investments in research led and managed through the provincial funding organizations make a significant contribution to generating value from research dollars across Canada. Examples of the positive impact on Canadians realized from provincial investments are plentiful (see links to NAPHRO websites in the table below).

NAPHRO Members:

Michael Smith Health Research BC
Fonds de recherche du Québec
Alberta Innovates
Research New Brunswick | Recherche Nouveau-Brunswick
Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation
Research Nova Scotia
Research Manitoba
Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research
Ontario Ministry of Health (Non-represented Member)

Overall, provincial investments:

- **Improve the Health System and Health Outcomes:** Investment in health research enhances healthcare systems, under provincial authority, by enabling access to clinical trials and new treatments, while also attracting investment into health innovation. This is not always well understood at the provincial level, where research can often be seen as a drain on health system resources, when in fact, it is a necessary component of an excellent, sustainable health system, attracts additional resources and ultimately contributes to better health outcomes for all Canadians. For example, see: [Health Research for Solutions: Over \\$2 Million Invested in Healthier Futures](#).
- **Leverage Federal and External Funding:** Provincial research investment is catalytic and essential to attracting and maximizing federal, industry, and not-for-profit funding, ensuring the provinces receive national and international research dollars. For example, see: [Breaking barriers in brain injury care – Health Research BC](#).
- **Support Talent Development:** Provincial support for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and early career researchers helps develop highly qualified personnel (HQP), fostering local talent and attracting top researchers to stay and grow their careers in the province. Early support for researchers can help launch careers and attract other research investment to the province. For example, see: [Research Manitoba Announces \\$1.4M in Funding to Support 64 Studentship and Fellowship Awards](#).
- **Enable Strategic Priorities:** Provincial funding allows for targeted investment in areas aligned with local priorities and strengths, such as innovation, Indigenous health, or climate resilience through strategic partnerships that respond directly to provincial needs. For example, see: [Research Nova Scotia's Focused Research Investments Program](#).
- **Strengthen Infrastructure and Capacity:** Sustained provincial investments build and maintain critical research infrastructure within academia and the health system, enabling world-class research to take

place in our own communities. Without the provincial support for programs like Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), these research infrastructure projects would not happen. For examples, see: [NB Dat a Centre Revolutionizes Government Decision Making](#) and [Ontario Research Fund](#).

- *Drive Collaboration and Innovation:* Funding at the provincial level bolsters the post-secondary sector and encourages collaboration among universities, colleges, health institutions, and industry partners. Provincial funding also provides a pathway for academic researchers to seek implementation opportunities or commercialize innovations discovered in their labs move to market readiness. For example, see programs supported through [Alberta Innovates](#).
- *Fuel Industrial R&D and Economic Growth:* By supporting cutting-edge research and talent development, provinces create an environment where industrial research and development can thrive, stimulating innovation, attracting companies, and growing the knowledge economy. Businesses and startups tend to go where they have access to support and talent. For example, see: [FRQ - Scientific and Innovative Venture Program \(SIVP\)](#).

Leadership and Collaboration for the Future

Successfully navigating our shifting context depends on all stakeholders in the research ecosystem coming together as a united Canadian front. NAPHRO stands ready to work with the federal government and our partners, old and new, to advance impactful research across Canada and co-design a made in Canada strategy to attract and retain research talent in all regions. Given the value of research and research talent to Canadian society and Canada's contribution on a global stage, this is a critically important - and timely - step forward.

Action areas for NAPHRO leadership and collaboration include:

- demonstrating and communicating the value of research to all interested parties (e.g., governments, public audiences, health system decision makers)
- sharing best practices (e.g., funding programs, peer and merit review, measuring impact) to make the research ecosystem more efficient and impactful
- brokering communication and engagement with and across provincial leaders and policy makers
- offering knowledge and expertise pertinent to understanding unique provincial contexts and dynamics