

BRAIN CANADA APPLAUDS BUDGET COMMITMENT FOR RESEARCH AND TREATMENT OF BRAIN DISORDERS

Federal Commitment of \$100 million will match private funds to address diseases affecting 1 in 3 Canadians

June 6, 2011 – Montreal, Quebec –Today is a turning point for the millions of Canadians who are affected by brain disorders, following Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's reaffirmation of \$100 million in federal matched funding for a public-private partnership to advance brain research in Canada. The partnership, led by Brain Canada, will fund some of the most excellent and innovative research in the world – using a uniquely Canadian model of interdisciplinary, multi-institutional collaboration that has already produced important breakthroughs in brain research.

As outlined in the Budget document, “To support Brain Canada’s efforts, Budget 2011 proposes to allocate up to \$100 million to establish the Canada Brain Research Fund, which will support the very best Canadian neuroscience, fostering collaborative research and accelerating the pace of discovery, in order to improve the health and quality of life of Canadians who suffer from brain disorders.”

“This major commitment to brain research is crucial to addressing diseases that are such a huge burden in our country and around the world. One in three Canadians will face a mental illness, or neurological disorder or injury in their lifetime. Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, depression, schizophrenia, stroke, autism, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, migraine, epilepsy and concussions are just a few of the wide spectrum of disorders that will benefit from new understanding and practical treatments arising out of the Canadian Brain Research Fund,” said Rupert Duchesne, Chair, Brain Canada.

The Canada Brain Research Fund will be a public-private partnership designed to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and will maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. Brain Canada has committed to raising \$100 million from private donors, which will be matched by government on a 1:1 basis. Brain Canada will further leverage these funds through partnerships with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Voluntary Health Organizations, provincial initiatives, universities and research institutes. The combined investment will fund research in ways that will accelerate the process of translating

basic research into new diagnostics, treatments and ultimately cures. Brain Canada will encourage all organizations raising funds for brain research to either contribute directly to the fund and have their donor dollars matched, or to partner on research programs to further leverage the public-private match.

The Brain Canada research program was developed in consultation with the neuroscience research community through the Canadian Association for Neuroscience. Funding recipients will be selected through an open competition model with rigorous national and international peer review, and monitored against milestones and deliverables. This will ensure that the funded research is focused on outcomes that will ultimately benefit patients and their families. The Board of Brain Canada – which has received national recognition for the quality of its governance – will ensure that the Canada Brain Research Fund is managed with the highest standards of ethics, transparency and accountability.

The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts

Brain research funding in Canada has traditionally supported individual scientists pursuing research in specific disciplines in individual laboratories. Recent experience indicates, however, that a collaborative approach to research, which complements the traditional approach, can accelerate how knowledge is translated into treatment. A key development is a focus on the brain as a single complex system rather than a “parts list” or a collection of distinct diseases.

“The future of innovative brain research will greatly benefit from a collaborative model that enables researchers to join efforts in order to enhance research of individuals, labs, institutions and provinces,” explained Dr. David Kaplan, Vice-Chair Science, Brain Canada.

“Understanding the linkages across various neurological and psychiatric conditions holds the key to the next generation of breakthroughs in this field.”

This unified perspective and a collaborative approach to research emerged during the 1990s, which was declared the Decade of the Brain. In the ensuing two decades, an explosion in brain research around the world generated 90% of our current knowledge of the brain and opened up the promise of new diagnostics and treatments, and ultimately cures, for brain disorders.

Canada is a leader in the field of neuroscience with many of the most important discoveries made by a Canadian researcher or lab. Canada also excels at collaboration and at making the most of our funding – an area in which we outpace American and European colleagues. The Canada Brain Research Fund will facilitate the creation of teams consisting of the best brain researchers in Canada working together to discover commonalities between brain disorders, and take advantage of this knowledge to develop breakthroughs.

Brain Disorders: The Health Challenge of the 21st Century

When direct costs and costs linked to disability are combined, the economic burden of brain disorders is estimated at \$60 billion, or about 38 per cent of the total burden of disease in Canada. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality), the cost of mental disorders alone is equal to that of cancer, at \$57.5 billion. Dr. Thomas R. Insel, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, estimates that the actual cost is more than \$317 billion per year.

“The impact of disorders of the brain exceeds that of cancer and cardiovascular disease combined – yet funding for brain research lags behind that of other diseases relative to the burden of disease,” concluded Mr. Duchesne.

Brain disorders are the leading cause of disability creating a lifelong burden for individuals, families and society. While some brain diseases respond to treatment, there are no cures. People with a brain disorder may live for years with their condition; with some conditions, people will slowly degenerate, lose function and no longer be able to care for themselves, which has a dramatic impact on families and on society. Given Canada’s demographics, the impact on the economy and society will continue to accelerate.

With appropriate funding involving the private and public sectors, Canada can turn the challenge of brain disorders and their enormous economic burden on our economy and society into an opportunity for global leadership.

Brain Canada

Brain Canada is the successor to NeuroScience Canada, a national, charitable organization that develops and supports collaborative, multidisciplinary, multi-institutional research across the neurosciences. Through partnering with the public, private and voluntary sectors, Brain Canada connects the knowledge and resources available in this area to accelerate neuroscience research and funding, and maximize the output of Canada's world-class scientists and researchers. In 2006, NeuroScience Canada received the Conference Board of Canada/Spencer Stuart non-profit National Award in Governance.

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