

**What the MS Society of Canada recommends:**

- That the Government proactively commits Canada to be a world leader in health research by providing federal research granting agencies the necessary financial resources to ensure innovative health research is translated rapidly into therapies that can benefit people with MS and other chronic conditions.
  - The MS Society recommends federal funding of health research increase immediately, in particular research funded through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Specifically, the MS Society and other members of the Health Charities Coalition of Canada call for the CIHR budget to be increased annually to a level equivalent to 1% of total health spending in Canada. (\$1.8 billion based on \$183.1 billion in health care funding as of 2009.)
- That the federal government ensures the generous contributions of Canadian donors to health research through the health charities reach their maximum potential by including health charities in the indirect costs of research program.

**View of the MS Society:**

- Canadian scientists have a well deserved international reputation for excellence. With appropriate resources, they will continue to produce results that will positively impact people who have MS and many other diseases and injuries.
- *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*, the science and technology strategy announced in 2007, states world-class research excellence is Canada's standard, and that talented, skilled, creative people are the most critical element of a successful national economy over the long term.
- The science and technology strategy recognizes that health – and related life sciences and technologies – is one of Canada's research strengths and pledged to build a critical mass of expertise in this priority area. The strategy also pledges to maintain Canada's G-7 leadership in public-sector research and development (R&D) performance by making new investments in R&D, in part, through the three federal research granting councils<sup>1</sup>, in areas where Canada has the potential to be a world leader.
- The science and technology strategy builds upon the creation of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in 2000. CIHR signalled to the world that Canada had initiated a new approach to science: a collaborative, cross-disciplinary approach of doing research that has energized research across the country, that has reversed the "brain drain" and that has attracted leading international scientist "stars" to Canadian laboratories and hospitals.
- Moving forward, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada recommends the Government of Canada accelerate funding to provide federal research granting councils with the necessary financial resources to ensure that world-class projects and researchers are funded across Canada.
- The focus should be on research that quickly yields results that can benefit people with MS and other chronic conditions.
- Specifically, the MS Society recommends the Government of Canada commit to significant, ongoing funding for Canada's premier health funding body - the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

The MS Society asks for your support in urging the Government of Canada to make these changes as quickly as possible to benefit people affected by MS and other chronic diseases and disabilities.

## Basic facts:

- Multiple sclerosis is an often progressive and disabling disease of the brain and spinal cord. Unfortunately, Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world with an estimated 55,000 to 75,000 people affected by the disease.
- While there are some treatments for MS, they have limited impact on stopping the worsening of the disease. As yet, there is no cure.
- The MS Society of Canada is committed to ending MS. It funds a \$10 million research program annually which supports the very best research projects and researchers at hospitals and universities from coast-to-coast. In addition, the program provides fellowships and scholarships to young scientists to attract them to the challenging and exciting world of MS research.
- In 2008, the MS Society launched the endMS Campaign, a new program designed to increase the pace of MS research. It will raise \$60 million over five years to recruit, train, support, and retain the next generation of MS researchers in Canada and accelerate their research activities to find a cure and improved treatments for MS. The flagship of this investment is the new endMS Research and Training Network.
- Canadian MS researchers are recognized internationally for advancing knowledge about MS in children, the use of bone marrow transplantation as a potential therapy, exploring vitamin D as a possible disease prevention strategy and pioneering magnetic resonance imaging as a tool to track the process of the disease.
- The MS Society works with a number of CIHR institutes to extend our reach: the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction, the Institute of Infection and Immunity and the Institute of Genetics.
- It is vital that funds from donors go to fund research into finding effective treatments and the cure of MS. As a member of the Health Charities Coalition of Canada, the MS Society agrees that health charities should be included in the indirect costs of research program, so donor-funded research is protected.
- The MS Society is also a member of Neurological Health Charities Canada, which is working with the Public Health Agency of Canada, CIHR and Health Canada on the first-ever national population-based study of neurological conditions. In June 2009, Minister of Health Leona Aglukkaq officially announced the federal government's commitment of \$15 million to a 4-year population-based study of neurological diseases, disorders and injuries in Canada. Research will be underway in the next few months. NHCC is also proposing the development of a Brain Strategy for Canada.
- The MS Society, along with other members of Neurological Health Charities Canada, is asking the Government of Canada for a Brain Strategy for Canada with neurological health research as a key pillar.
- All of these efforts build on the solid foundation provided by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Genome Canada, Canadian Foundation for Innovation and the Stem Cell Network. The MS Society's research program and those of other health charities rely on federally-funded agencies to support the basic science that researchers from all disciplines build on.

For more information, please contact:  
Deanna Groetzinger  
Vice-President, Government Relations & Policy  
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada  
416-967-3007; [deanna.groetzinger@mssociety.ca](mailto:deanna.groetzinger@mssociety.ca)

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1 The federal research granting councils are: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR); Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).