



# CANADIAN BRAIN RESEARCH STRATEGY

## SRSR Study on The Mission, Mandate, Role, Structure and Financing of the New Capstone Research Funding Organization Announced in Budget 2024

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### Opening Remarks

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Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. I am genuinely grateful to address this committee today and I recognize the level of dedication each of you brings to this work. The effort you're investing here—to ensure that Canada's research dollars have the greatest possible impact—mirrors what we in the research community strive for.

I'm here today as the Executive Director of the Canadian Brain Research Strategy, or CBRS. CBRS is a pan-Canadian coalition representing 40 neuroscience and mental health research programs, along with clinicians, patient organizations, Indigenous partners, health charities, research funders, and industry partners. Together, we are united by a common goal: advancing brain health for Canadians through collaborative and impactful research.

Investing in brain research is essential for Canada. One in five Canadians lives with a brain condition—whether it's dementia, mental illness, brain injury, or addiction. Every one of us knows someone affected by these conditions, and we all have brains that we want to keep functioning at their best. We know the impact of brain health goes far beyond the individual. Brain conditions affect our healthcare system, economy, workforce productivity, and social structures, and this impact will only intensify as our population ages. Addressing these complex issues requires sustained research investment, like that announced in Budget 2024, and a coordinated national approach.

It's truly an exciting time with the historic investments in science and research that were announced in Budget 2024. Now, as we work to catch up with our G7 peers, it's essential that we think about how to invest more strategically and build together toward a more cohesive research ecosystem.

One of the Capstone's foundational aims is to support multidisciplinary research, which is essential as the scientific landscape evolves and challenges grow more complex. This focus is especially crucial in a frontier field like brain and mental health research, where its intersection with artificial intelligence puts it somewhere between CIHR and NSERC. Add in the importance of psychology and other social sciences, and it means that brain research often falls outside the mandates of our existing funding agencies. This challenge illustrates why we need an



overarching organization like Capstone—to bridge gaps and ensure that no field, particularly complex ones like brain research, is left without sufficient support.

Our proposed national brain research strategy offers a model for how we might think about the benefits of the Capstone. We've established a framework that encourages collaboration among diverse academic disciplines and, crucially, connects basic research, clinical applications, and pathways to commercialization. By leveraging the Capstone's potential, we can ensure that research discoveries are effectively translated into practical solutions and improved health and economic outcomes for Canadians.

These types of frameworks thrive when they are mission-driven yet still expert-informed, a balance that is essential if we're to achieve Capstone's vision of a strategically unified and impactful research ecosystem.

Research priorities and funding decisions are most effective when grounded in the specialized knowledge that experts bring to their fields. Our own proposed national strategy at CBRS was developed with this principle in mind, representing 40 neuroscience and mental health research programs across the country, but also recognizing the expertise that patients and patient advocacy groups, Indigenous Knowledges Holders, funding organizations, health charities, and industry bring.

This expert-based foundation not only strengthens the quality and relevance of our work but also aligns our projects with the real-world needs of Canadians. As we move forward, it's vital that Capstone's decision-making is guided by experts, even as we work toward larger mission-driven goals.

In closing, I want to emphasize the great potential Capstone holds to reshape Canada's research environment into one that is more collaborative, inclusive, and strategically aligned. By bridging existing gaps and supporting multidisciplinary research, Capstone can amplify the strengths we already have within Canada's scientific community. And with expert-driven guidance, we can ensure that the national strategy is responsive to the most pressing challenges facing our society.

As we work to modernize research funding structures to keep pace with the evolving demands of research itself, we need ongoing opportunities for collaboration like these. The Capstone initiative is a step toward creating the efficient, cohesive support structures our researchers need, but it will require everyone working together for this vision to succeed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion. I look forward to any questions you may have.