

## **Alberta's three neuroscience institutes partner with Campus Alberta Neuroscience for first-of-its-kind program in Western Canada**

*Federally-funded provincial neuroscience program to offer enhanced end-to-end commercialization pathway for brain health innovations*

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The Brain Innovations Program will be the first neuroscience-focused end-to-end commercialization and talent development program in Western Canada, thanks in part to more than \$2.2 million in federal funding through [PrairiesCan](#)'s Jobs and Growth Fund. Building on existing infrastructure, networks, and expertise, the program will ultimately develop Alberta as a neuroscience innovation cluster through a partnership with Campus Alberta Neuroscience (CAN), the Hotchkiss Brain Institute at University of Calgary, the Neuroscience and Mental Health Institute (NMHI) at University of Alberta, the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience at University of Lethbridge, and ST Innovations, the business arm of the SMART Network.

Brain and mental health disorders affect 1 in 3 Canadians, and aside from personal and societal impact, have an economic cost estimated at \$61 billion annually according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. This massive burden is increasing each year due to an aging society and population growth. The Brain Innovations Program leverages Alberta's competitive advantage in neuroscience research and innovation to increase opportunities for translation from "bench to marketplace," reducing the burden of brain disorders while driving economic growth and diversification.

"Access to health care services when and where we need it is a critical part of our health care system, and that includes mental health and mental wellness. The ideas, products and services that Alberta innovators and entrepreneurs are developing to promote mental wellness will make much-needed improvements to our health care system. Our government's investment in the Brain Innovations Program will bolster the capacity of small- and medium-sized life sciences firms across Alberta to access the critical resources they need to grow, create jobs, and continue to enhance our valued health care system."

- ***The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for PrairiesCan***

"NMHI is excited about the Brain Innovations Program, which will provide more support and training in neuroscience innovation and commercialization in Alberta. NMHI trainees and faculty will benefit from education, consulting, resources, and partnerships across all stages of the commercialization pathway. This program will accelerate the translation of NMHI research into products and services that benefit Albertans affected by neurological and mental health conditions."

- ***Dr. Ian Winship, Deputy Director, NMHI, University of Alberta***

The Brain Innovations Program will champion innovators and early-stage development of technologies, some straight out of Alberta's universities, through assistance with prototyping, business development, ecosystem navigation, and investment attraction. It will offer support across the entire commercialization pathway, including talent development to produce highly qualified personnel for the province's health and life sciences industry.

"Our previous work seed funding neuroscience entrepreneurs in Alberta was exceptionally successful and rewarding. We found that many brilliant entrepreneurs were just looking for a bit of funding to get off the ground, and the results from those relatively small investments are incredibly inspiring. CAN is delighted to continue supporting Alberta innovators to realize their amazing, novel solutions in brain and mental health."

- ***Neil Neary, Executive Director, Campus Alberta Neuroscience***

Strengthening the commercialization pipeline and developing a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit amongst the neuroscience communities in Alberta, the Brain Innovations Program will help establish the future workforce needed to diversify and transition to a knowledge-based provincial economy. The program will contribute to the health and life sciences industry in Alberta by increasing the number of health tech companies and jobs, attracting talent and investment to the province, and supporting the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs - driving economic growth for decades to come.

CAN has a history of facilitating neuro-entrepreneurial excellence, with a track record of securing over \$22 million in funding for brain health research and translation. CAN's entrepreneurial seed grant program supported the development of 11 Alberta-based companies over just two years, creating more than 70 new jobs and catalyzing a further \$33 million in follow-on investment. CAN's expertise in supporting innovation, along with its strong and diverse network of academic institutes, NGOs, government bodies, health system agencies, and industry partners, will continue to be leveraged through the Brain Innovations Program via the NeuroSpark Innovations Grants, a new activities granting program launching in July 2023.

The Brain Innovations Program constitutes a promising partnership and investment that will position Alberta as a global leader in neuroscience innovation, creating the opportunity for novel made-in-Alberta brain health solutions to have a lasting impact reaching beyond provincial borders.

### **About PrairiesCan**

PrairiesCan is the federal department that supports economic growth in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Its programs and services help businesses, not-for-profits and communities grow stronger. Its mandate is to support economic growth and diversification in the Prairie provinces and advance the interests of the region in national economic policy, programs and projects. Learn more at [www.prairiescan.gc.ca](http://www.prairiescan.gc.ca)

### **About Campus Alberta Neuroscience**

Campus Alberta Neuroscience (CAN), established in 2012 with support from the Government of Alberta, is a province-wide neuroscience network connecting the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge to increase the impact of neuroscience and mental health research, education, and translation, developing the province as an epicenter for neuroscience excellence. Through collaborative partnerships with researchers, government and health system stakeholders, industry and community organizations, CAN supports and accelerates innovative brain and mental health advances that improve brain health, patient care, and quality of life in Alberta and beyond. To learn more, visit [www.albertaneuro.ca](http://www.albertaneuro.ca)

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