



## PAN-CANADIAN WOMEN'S HEALTH COALITION

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne  
Minister of Finance  
90 Elgin Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G5  
Via email: [yourbudget-votrebudget@fin.gc.ca](mailto:yourbudget-votrebudget@fin.gc.ca)

August 28, 2025

Dear Minister Champagne,

On behalf of the Pan-Canadian Women's Health Coalition (the Coalition), thank you for the opportunity to participate in Canadians' dialogue to shape Budget 2025. We are pleased to share our recommendations to unlock Canada's full potential in the pivotal area of women's health research and innovation. The impact of women's health extends beyond individuals: healthy women are the foundation of a stronger economy, thriving communities, and efficient public resources. Investing in women's health research is therefore a high-return economic strategy that will contribute to better health and a prosperous future for Canadians.

The Coalition is an initiative supported by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) and Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada as part of the National Women's Health Research Initiative. Comprising 10 research hubs across Canada, the Coalition addresses long-standing gaps in women's and gender-diverse people's health by advancing inclusive, equity-based approaches to research and care. Collectively, the Coalition brings together approximately 600 stakeholders and rights holders, using an integrated approach to research that embeds innovation within clinical practice and community-based settings.

The Coalition has built expertise in women's health across the lifespan. Topics that we are deeply invested in include, but are not limited to, healthy and respectful pregnancy and post-pregnancy care, sexual and reproductive health including sexual dysfunction and genital pain, the impact of social and systemic factors on health (including violence and adversity), and broader health concerns such as cardiovascular health and HIV. With a mandate to lead knowledge mobilization in these key areas of women's health, the Coalition is centred on realizing tangible impacts for Canadian women and gender diverse people, their families, and their communities.

### **National Strategy for Women's Health and Health Research: A high-return economic strategy**

Women represent 51% of Canada's population and nearly half of the overall labour force. Within the healthcare sector specifically, women comprise more than 75% of professionals. Women also make 80% of household health care decisions and drive 85% of consumer spending. Compared to men (38%), 62% of women providing care are dual caregivers: supporting children as well as care-dependent adults. Consequently, any decline

in women's participation has a profound effect on the health and wellbeing of Canadian society.

Despite this, the Canadian economy absorbs billions in lost productivity due to preventable, under-researched health conditions that disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse people. Women remain far more likely than men to be misdiagnosed or receive ineffective treatment, and female-specific conditions like endometriosis and menopause remain severely under-researched. These unmet health needs lead to increased absenteeism, delayed diagnoses, higher health care costs, and reduced workforce participation. The ripple effects extend across the economy, from diminished caregiving capacity to greater reliance on social programs. By contrast, investing in their health strengthens family well-being, improves early childhood outcomes and supports healthier aging. All of these outcomes reduce long-term demand on public services.

Investing in women's health is not only a matter of equity – it is a strategic driver of progress and holds massive untapped economic potential. Investments in research will result in treatments and cures that spur economic growth in Canada's health innovation and pharmaceutical industries. According to a McKinsey Global Institute analysis, closing the gender gap in health outcomes could boost global GDP by \$1 trillion USD annually by 2040. This represents a return of \$3 for every \$1 invested.

**In response, Canada must implement a National Strategy for Women's Health**, which provides a coordinated approach to addressing women's health inequities including barriers to reproductive care, higher rates of gender-based violence and mental health challenges, systemic racism in healthcare, and unequal access to preventive and chronic disease services, shaped by intersecting social and structural factors. A dedicated strategy would be able to set measurable goals and ensure that all funding is as strategic, optimized, and effective as possible.

**The bottom line: Inclusive health research is not a cost. It is a catalyst, and it results in savings and benefits to the Canadian economy.**

## **Cultivating Canada's research talent through multi-stream investment**

A 2022 analysis of CIHR funding revealed that between 2009 and 2020, the proportion of grants focused on female-specific health showed no measurable growth, despite the rising prevalence of conditions such as endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and autoimmune diseases that disproportionately affect women. Presently, research mentioning sex, gender, female-specific health or 2SLGBTQ+ health consistently represents less than 10% of all funded project/operating grants at CIHR.

While peer countries move decisively, Canada has not yet scaled to match the magnitude of the gap. In 2022, the U.K. launched its 10-year Women's Health Strategy, and in February 2025, Australia committed over \$500 million AUD to support women's health research. Canada must act with similar ambition and vision, leveraging all of Canada's research talent, capacity, and skills to build such an impactful and sustainable vision. That's where public channels, like CIHR, are critical.

**A vibrant women's health research ecosystem thrives when both public channels like CIHR, as well as established foundations, are well-funded: each contributing their unique strengths and expertise to support researchers at every stage.**

To this end, CIHR was created to modernize and expand the scope of the government's medical research, has played a critical role in supporting Canadian health science, funding more than \$1.3 billion annually in grants and awards. CIHR provides a transparent and equitable peer-reviewed mechanism that ensures high research quality, public accountability and alignment with Canadian-identified priorities. Evolving societal needs, including calls for greater equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research, have revealed structural limitations in how excellence is defined and rewarded. However, despite efforts to embed EDI throughout the CIHR's funding system and research priorities, women and female-specific research remains persistently underfunded.

This disparity in research funding must be addressed. Part of CIHR's mandate is to expand the government's research in health services and population health. This cannot be achieved if the health realities of half the population are consistently overlooked and underfunded.

**Accordingly, we urge the government to ensure that 20% of CIHR's annual budget be ringfenced for dedicated investment in women and gender diverse people's health research.** This will strengthen CIHR's essential role as a champion for impactful, rigorous and cutting-edge research.

## **A healthy and prosperous future**

Canada has an opportunity to demonstrate global leadership in an area that has long been underfunded and overlooked: the health of women and gender-diverse people. Healthier women mean a healthier workforce, stronger families, more resilient communities and reduced strain on public systems.

**With significant, strategic, and safe-guarded public investment,** the Government of Canada can spur innovation in diagnostics, treatment and prevention, improve productivity by reducing the burden of underdiagnosed and mismanaged conditions, and position Canada as a global leader in gender-informed health sciences. We urge the government to seize this opportunity through Budget 2025.

Sincerely,

The Pan-Canadian Women's Health Coalition