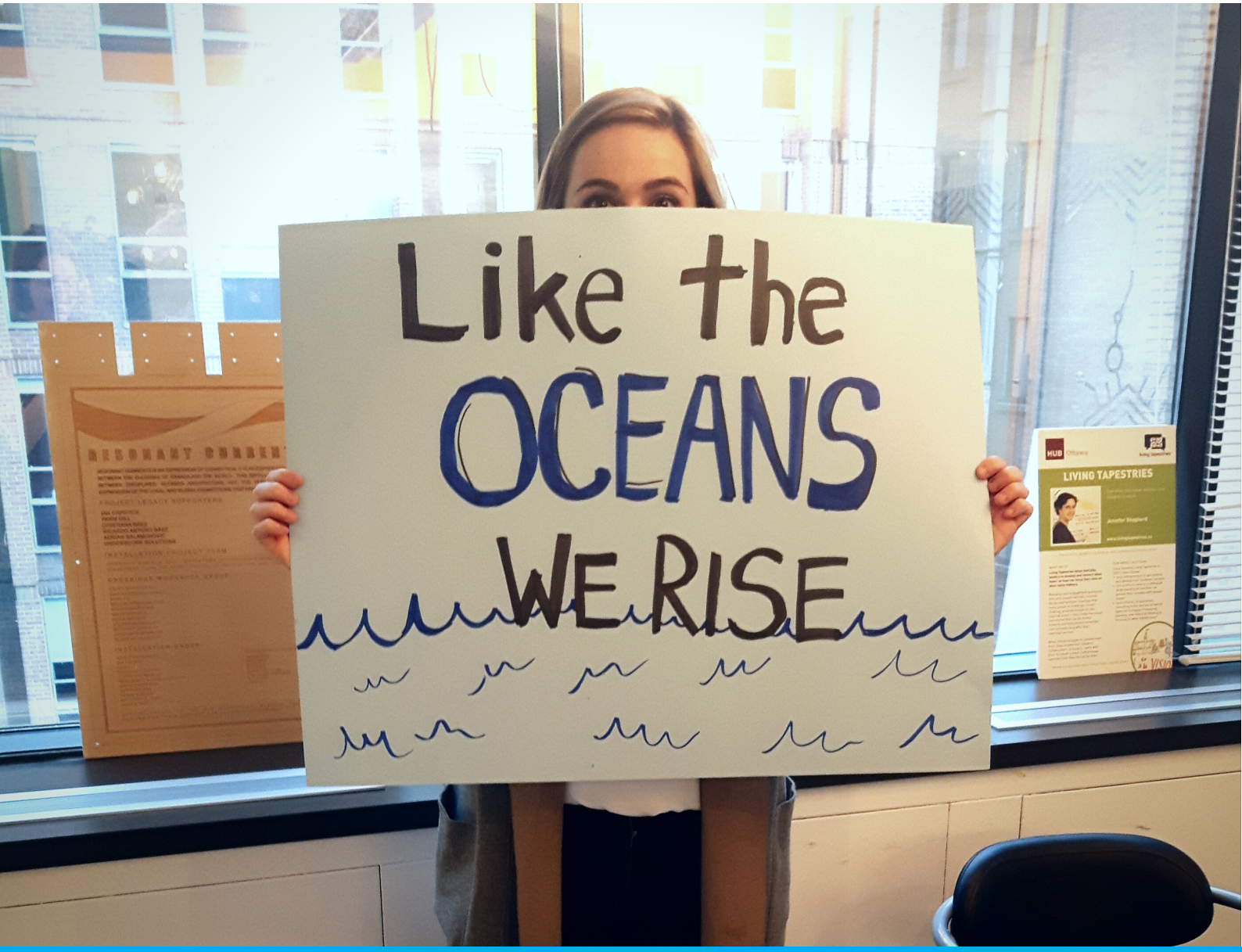
IMPACT REPORT

EVIDENCE FOR DEMOCRACY

2020-2021



Strong science, strong democracy

Because we all benefit when governments make decisions informed by the best available evidence.

Evidence for Democracy (E4D) is the leading voice for evidence-informed decision-making in governments across the Canadian federation. We engage and empower the science community to cultivate public and political demand for science and evidence through issues-based campaigns, original research, and skills-based training.

The seed for E4D was planted in 2012 when thousands of Canadians, concerned about the diminishing role of science and evidence in the federal government, came together through the nationwide rally known as the Death of Evidence. Their message was clear: we need transparent, evidence-informed decision-making for a strong democracy. The co-organizers of the Death of Evidence realized that Canada needed a sustained voice for science and evidence in public policy, and went on to form E4D.

Ever since, E4D has worked to advocate for evidence-informed public policy for the prosperity of all Canadians. To do so, we build campaigns to tackle issues affecting science and evidence-informed public policy. These campaigns often emerge from our original research, which address knowledge gaps at the science-policy interface. Our critical analyses help support government, industry, nonprofits and the public to strengthen the practice of evidence-informed decision-making. We also design and deliver hands-on workshops, which provide new skills for the Canadian science community. Our training program also facilitates expert panels, lectures, and other events to highlight issues concerning evidence-informed decision-making.

Together, we can raise our voices to make evidence-informed decision-making a fundamental part of public policy in Canada.



Death of Evidence, July 2012

Message from the Executive Director



When I joined the Evidence for Democracy team earlier this year, I was welcomed by a talented team and Board of Directors, who offered so much of their time and knowledge to set me on the right path. I was also embraced by an enthusiastic community of supporters, who reached out with many messages of encouragement and excitement. It was quickly clear to me that there is great generosity in this team and community, and I can't wait to carry that with me on the journey forward.

The past year has been one of incredible change for the organization. We bid farewell to our founding Executive Director, Dr. Katie Gibbs, and to our interim leader and former Director of Research and Policy, Dr. Kimberly Girling. We also welcomed new talent to the team, who will no doubt begin to make their own mark on the organization as it moves into its next chapter.



Dr. Katie Gibbs (left) and Dr. Kimberly Girling (right)

Of course, this has all unfolded against the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, which continue to put science in the global spotlight like never before.

From immunology, virology and epidemiology, to genome sequencing and mRNA vaccines, the solutions delivered by science have unfolded at a pace unmatched by nearly any other tool at our disposal these last 18 months. This is the kind of problem-solving capacity that should not be tucked away for the next crisis, but used to converge resources onto all our biggest challenges.

All of this is top of mind for us at E4D, as it casts so much of our work - past and present - into new light. Our *Evidence in Action* report about how Members of Parliament access information is more relevant than ever. Same too for our body of work on science integrity, and our recent work on misinformation. Our latest report, *Eyes on Evidence*, takes a deep dive into transparency and looks at whether the public can find and understand the evidence used in government decisions. And naturally, our campaigns for stronger investments in science and safeguarding science advice in government also keep reminding us of their relevance.

Unlocking scientific insights more broadly in policy contexts no doubt requires a much closer examination of what is truly needed from all sides of the science-policy divide. Canada needs science and evidence more than ever. Let's keep working together to build strong science, strong democracy, and a stronger future.

Rachael Maxwell

THE YEAR IN CAMPAIGNS:

Keeping science in the public eye

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has refocused the need for a strong science capacity in government decision-making, and on a global scale, highlighted the necessity of advocating for systems that support integrating the best available evidence. Over the last year, our issues-campaigns pivoted on making this very case, which were robustly supported by thousands within our pan-Canadian community.

Safeguarding the role of Canada's Chief Science Advisor

Canada's Chief Science Advisor (CSA), Dr. Mona Nemer, and her office play a critical role in supporting science and evidence-informed decision-making. The CSA ensures government science is fully available to the public, allows government scientists to speak freely about their work, and supports the use of strong science in government.



Dr. Mona Nemer, Canada's Chief Science Advisor

In August 2020, we launched a campaign to keep science advice at the forefront of federal government decision-making in Canada. We sent an open letter to the Prime Minister,

>2,000 signers

the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry, urging them to formalize the position of the CSA, which was set to conclude in September 2020.

Soon after, in October 2020, the Prime Minister reappointed Dr. Mona Nemer as Canada's Chief Science Advisor for a second two-year mandate, which is set to conclude in September 2022.

As part of our ongoing work, we continue to advocate for a more permanent safeguard to this position to secure the future of science advice in the federal government.

Safeguarding Science in British Columbia

48%
of scientific professionals in the BC public service lack sufficient research capacity to meet their Ministerial mandates

93%
believe the public would benefit from greater professional capacity in the public service

Scientific professionals in provincial governments play a fundamental role in protecting public health, preserving natural resources, contributing to our economy, and ensuring safety and prosperity. In 2017, E4D researched the state of science in the British Columbia (B.C.) public sector, and found that scientific professionals had concerns about transparency.

This year in partnership with the Professional Employees Association (PEA), we conducted a new survey with over 1,200 BC public service scientists to update this research, evaluating any changes to science integrity over the past three years. We also launched the Spotlight on Integrity campaign with the PEA to encourage elected representatives in B.C. to take steps to strengthen scientific integrity in the province. B.C.'s scientific professionals repeatedly expressed concern for the mismatch between available resources and their scientific mandates.

BC's scientific professionals repeatedly expressed concern for the mismatch between available resources and their scientific mandates.

To protect public sector science and to ensure it continues to serve the public, government science must be well supported, completed without interference, communicated effectively, and used transparently in government decision-making. Together, these create a strong culture of science integrity in the public service. We are committed to bringing this kind of work to more provinces, and other levels of government.

150 signers



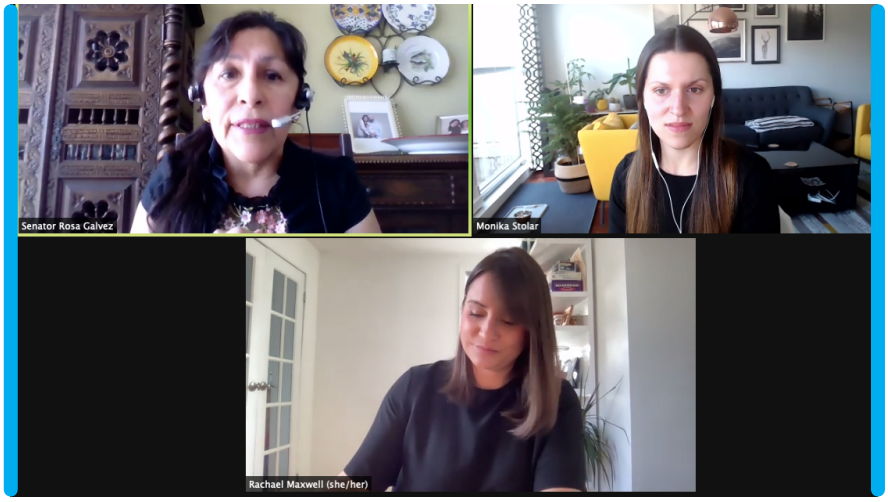
Science in the federal government

This year, we closely followed government commitments to science and evidence by participating in the 2021 pre-budget submission, and providing analysis on both the 2020 Speech from the Throne and the 2021 federal budget.



In April 2021, the government tabled Canada's first federal budget in two years. We examined the implications of Canada's 2021 budget against the recommendations we called for in our pre-budget consultation in three main areas: 1) ensuring governments and the public can find and use evidence, 2) transparency and openness, and 3) support for research and data collection. Notably, we asked for commitments to strengthen the role of science advice, including protecting the role of the CSA.

While Budget 2021 did not include increased investments to the CSA, we were pleased to see several new investments across Canada's science ecosystem, from targeted research funding, to investments in data capacity, and climate action. We will continue to monitor the progress on the investments outlined in Budget 2021.



*In conversation with **Senator Rosa Galvez** and **Dr. Monika Stolar** of Elect STEM.*



A New Standing Committee on Science and Research



A significant development this year was the approval of a new Standing Committee on Science and Research, offering a new channel of engagement and dialogue between scientists and elected decision-makers. Motion-38 (M-38), was tabled by Member of Parliament (MP) Kirsty Duncan, Canada's former Minister of Science, in the first session of the 43rd Parliament and was passed unanimously on May 27, 2021.

Establishing a Standing Committee for Science and Research is a critical step in recognizing the importance of science and research to all Canadians by bringing it directly into the House of Commons. The Committee is expected to review and report on all matters relating to science and research, and will work closely with Canada's Chief Science Advisor. We kept our community updated on developments on M-38 and will continue to do so in Canada's next session of Parliament.



Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament

Media

E4D continues to be a sought after source for commentary for journalists covering a wide range of science-related topics. This year, E4D was featured in:

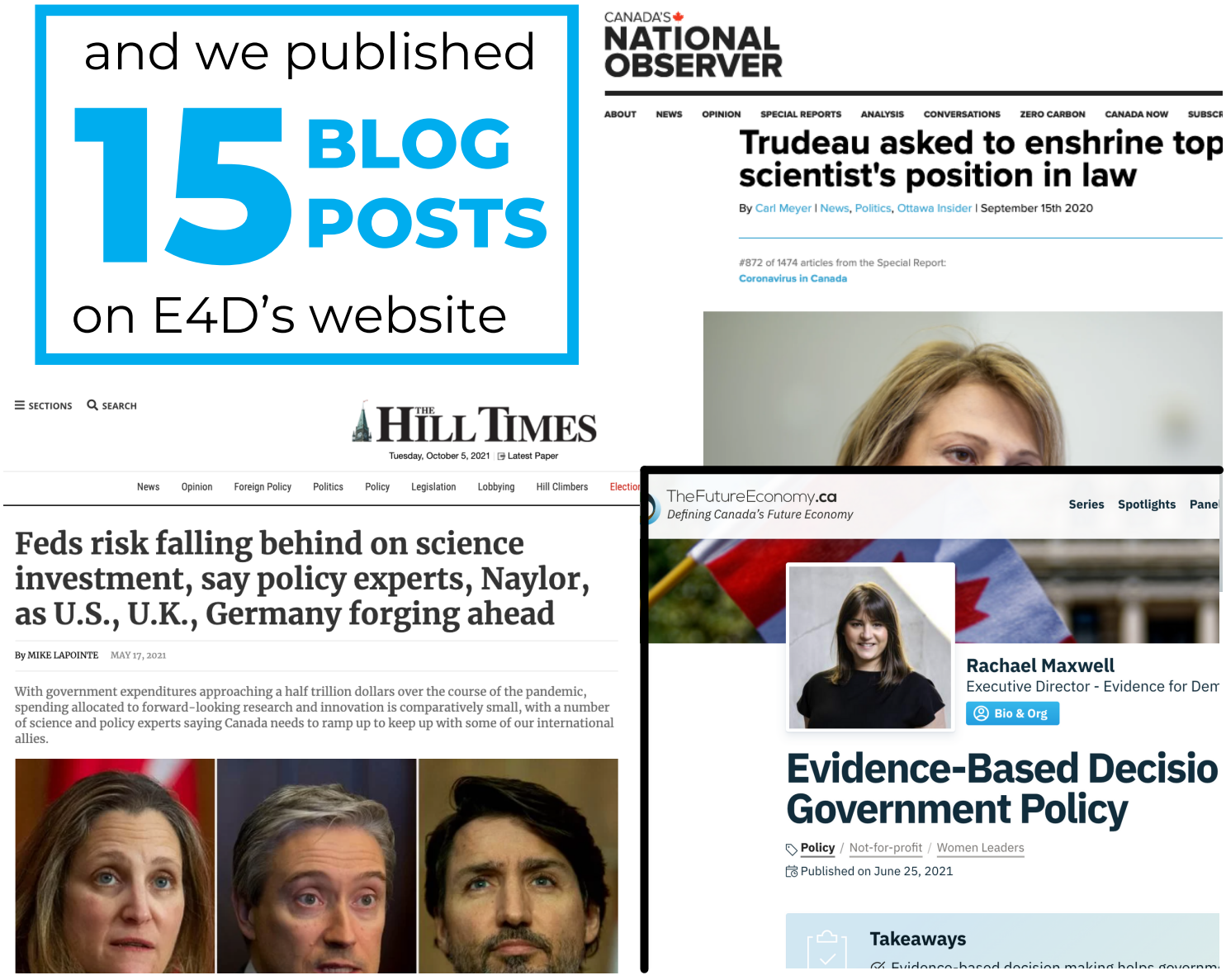
13 MEDIA ARTICLES & RADIO INTERVIEWS

in major media outlets.

and we published

15 BLOG POSTS

on E4D's website



THE YEAR IN RESEARCH:

Narrowing the science-policy gap

Our original research program addresses knowledge gaps at the interface of policy and evidence. Our reports identify what works, and opportunities for improvement, helping ensure that the public and politicians alike find the information they need to make informed decisions.

This year's research themes were guided by issues under scrutiny in the COVID-19 context: transparency of evidence in government decisions, the growing threat of misinformation in Canada, and plain language writing of science and research.

New Report:

Misinformation in Canada — Research and Policy Options

The ongoing spread of false and misleading information surrounding COVID-19 continues to present major obstacles on the road to full recovery in Canada and abroad. In May 2020, we completed a report on the research landscape of mis- and disinformation in Canada. The report also outlined policy options for addressing misinformation in Canada's unique environment.



The project identified an emerging body of research that indicates misinformation is a threat to public health and safety, as well as to the legitimacy of democratic processes in Canada. Our literature review showed evidence that the differing political, media, legal, and cultural landscapes in Canada, at every level of government and community, all shape the spread and impact of misinformation. Through a survey of Canadian institutions, we also investigated how individuals and organizations can help address misinformation, and identified the training needs in the community.

Our research demonstrated that individuals, organizations, and governments all have a role to play in addressing misinformation. Further research is needed to identify gaps in knowledge and properly inform government decisions. These policy options can include funding literacy and research initiatives, and criminalizing aspects of creating and spreading disinformation — false information with intent to deceive. Employed together, a multifaceted policy approach, as well as actions from individuals and organizations, can reduce the spread and impact of misinformation on public discourse and democratic process.





How to address misinformation

Best practices recommend addressing misinformation privately may be more effective than in a public setting.

1. Challenge the information, not the person who shared it.
2. Try to empathize with them and understand their concerns, don't speak down to them.
3. It can be helpful to focus on the technique of deception, as opposed to the misinformation itself.
4. Provide the correct explanation - this will be more successful with a plausible explanation.

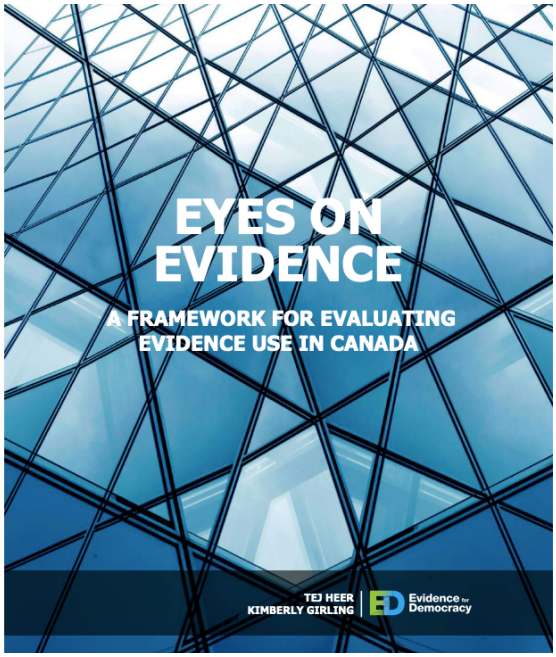


New Report: *Eyes on Evidence*

Transparency is a fundamental element of healthy democracy. For the public, it provides a lens to see and understand how governments arrive at their decisions, to consider whether those decisions are working, and to hold elected officials accountable for their decisions. For researchers, transparency provides a tool to examine where gaps in knowledge exist, and how they can contribute relevant or missing information.

Importantly, communicating about the evidence used to inform decisions isn't a bonus to be included in policy announcements only when time and resources permit. Transparency must be prioritized throughout the policymaking process, especially in times of increased uncertainty when trust in government is mission critical.

In June 2020, we released our new report, *Eyes on Evidence*, our first-ever dedicated project on transparency, introducing a framework for assessing how evidence informs policy in Canada. Originally developed in the U.K. by Sense About Science, the framework assesses how transparent governments are about the evidence used to inform their decisions. As part of this work, we also developed a series of best practices that government entities can adopt to highlight evidence more effectively when making policy announcements to the public.



		0	1	2	3
Diagnosis: What do policymakers know about the issue (e.g. causes, effects and scale)?	*Can you see what evidence has been used and the role it has played?*	Not enough for level 1.	Evidence is mentioned, with explanation of how it has been used	As in level 1, but the supporting evidence is linked to the relevant parts of the policy, properly cited, and able to be found.	As in level 2, but the evidence base is also assessed, with consideration of uncertainties and contradictory information.
Proposal: What is the government's chosen intervention and why was it chosen?	*Can you see what evidence has been used and the role it has played?*	Not enough for level 1	Evidence is mentioned, with explanation of how it has been used	As in level 1 but the supporting evidence is linked to the relevant parts of the policy, properly cited, and able to be found.	As in level 2, but the evidence base is also assessed, with consideration of alternate options, uncertainties, and contradictions
Implementation: How will the chosen intervention be rolled out and why was this method chosen?	*Can you see what evidence has been used and the role it has played?*	Not enough for level 1	Evidence is mentioned, with explanation of how it has been used	As in level 1 but the supporting evidence is linked to the relevant parts of the policy, properly cited, and able to be found.	As in level 2, but the evidence base is also assessed, with consideration of alternate options, uncertainties, and contradictions
Testing and evaluation: "How and when will we know if the policy has worked?"	*Can you see what evidence will be provided and when it will be provided?*	Not enough for level 1	Success measures (or process for developing them outlined), with no plans for testing/ evaluation (or explanation for why inappropriate)	As in level 1, but with plans for testing/ evaluation, including timetable (or explanation for why inappropriate)	As in level 2, with explanation of why these testing/ evaluation methods are chosen, with linked evidence properly cited and able to be found.

In the coming year, we will release the second part of *Eyes on Evidence*, which will cover our findings from a systematic assessment of the transparency of evidence in the federal government.

THE YEAR IN TRAINING:

Equipping Our Community with Skills and Resources

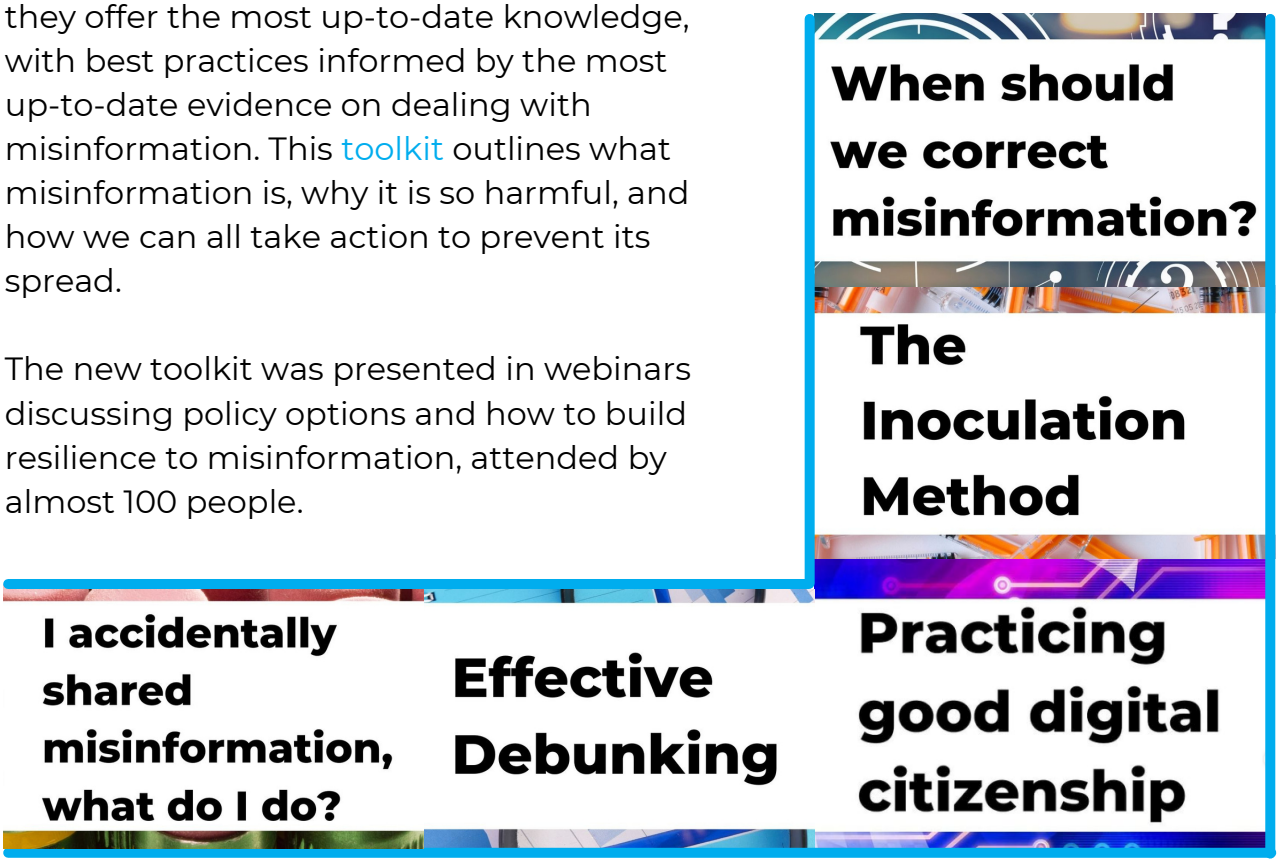
Canada's desire to advocate for science and evidence in our democracy is growing. The role that individuals in the research community play at the intersection of science and policy has become much clearer over the course of the pandemic. This in turn means that our role in training people across the science and policy communities is more important than ever. This past year, we continued to deliver impactful and relevant training to our community to provide the tools and skills to understand and engage in government policy.

New Resources

An Updated Toolkit on Misinformation

As part of our work on misinformation this year, we updated our resources for addressing misinformation to make sure they offer the most up-to-date knowledge, with best practices informed by the most up-to-date evidence on dealing with misinformation. This toolkit outlines what misinformation is, why it is so harmful, and how we can all take action to prevent its spread.

The new toolkit was presented in webinars discussing policy options and how to build resilience to misinformation, attended by almost 100 people.



Plain Language Toolkit

Research often involves specialized information that is inaccessible to non-specialist readers. Making science comprehensible and useful to diverse stakeholders requires that the language of science be plain and simple.



This is challenging: authors need to be able to explain the same concepts found in technical writing with the same level of accuracy, certainty and precision, but in language that most readers will understand.

In August 2020, we released our new toolkit for preparing plain language summaries, thanks to a collaboration with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC). In this toolkit, we present the best practices for writing in plain language, with a special focus on wording, structure and design. This new toolkit was rolled out as a webinar first to the IAAC, and then to the E4D community. The latter was attended by over 100 individuals, and prompted widespread support, including an invitation to share a behind-the-scenes look at the toolkit's development for a PLAIN Canada webinar.

Our community is growing!

>1,400 Volunteers

588 Members in E4D's Network of Experts

16,000 Newsletter subscribers

Webinars and Events

This year, E4D presented in **22** webinars, talks, panels, and trainings.









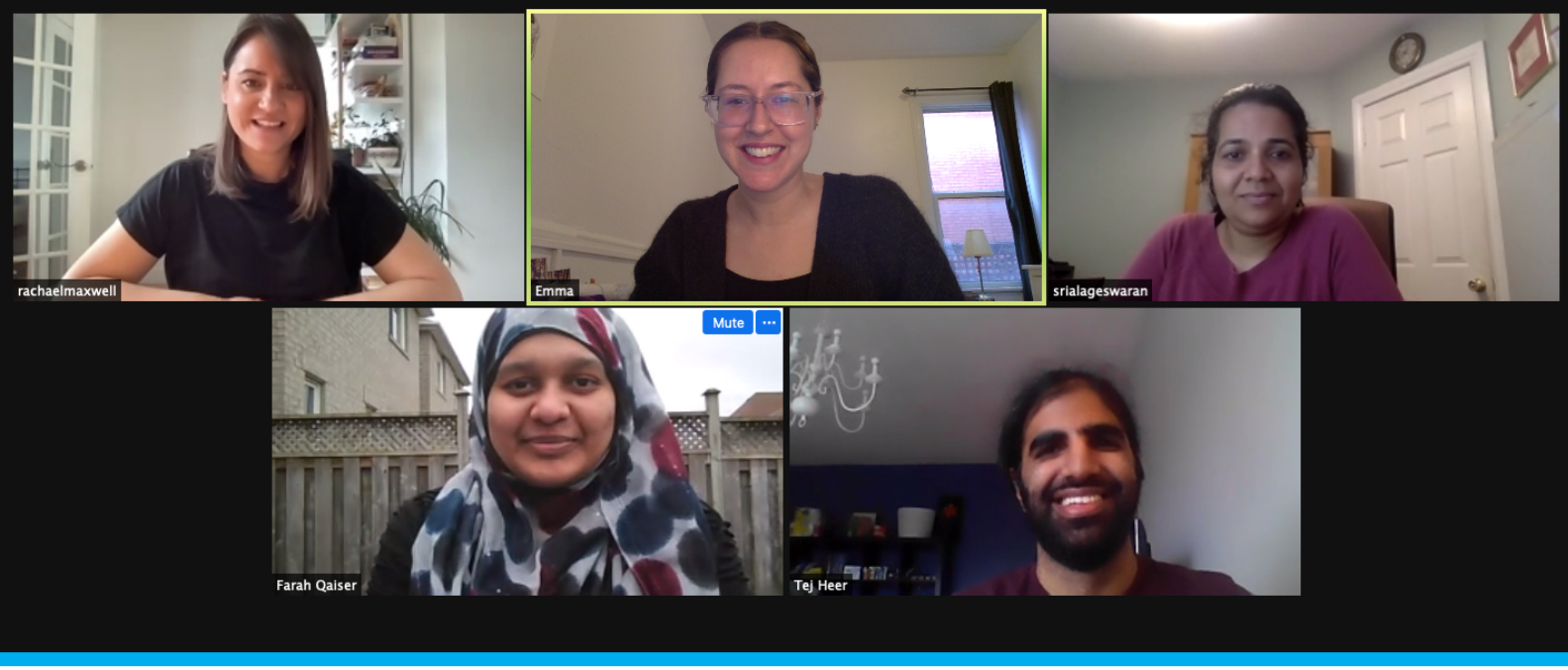




Our webinars and events reached nearly

1,400 attendees

As part of E4D's training program, we developed a series for BC public servants, in partnership with PEA, on how to communicate with political representatives, understand science policy, and advocate for science. Several of our talks this year also focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on issues related to data, science policy, and graduate students in Canada.



THE YEAR AHEAD:

Repositioning evidence in the next normal

This will be a year unlike any other for E4D, one that will take stock of a decade of impact and look forward to the next, all with a brand-new team at the helm. We recognize that the global pandemic has fundamentally changed the trajectory of science and evidence-informed decision-making. It's time to adapt and use the momentum of the past year to renew Canada's focus on science and evidence. As such, our next year will focus on three core themes.

The Evidence Landscape

In July of 2012, thousands of Canadian scientists and their supporters took to the streets of Ottawa to send a message to the federal government. The message was loud and clear: they would not stand by as the government employed tactics to suppress and muzzle scientific expertise and inquiry. This event, known as the Death of Evidence, made headlines across Canada and around the world, and became a dramatic turning point for the scientific community in Canada. It also spurred the birth of Evidence for Democracy.

In July of 2022, E4D will mark the ten year anniversary of this landmark event, which forever changed the interaction of the Canadian science enterprise with the world of politics and government policy.



Looking back at the impact of the last decade, at what worked and what didn't, and at what Canadians need most from their government, will be the basis of how we strategize to move forward in a post-pandemic world. We look forward to sharing our reflections with the broader community, and continuing to advocate together for a democracy where evidence is deeply embedded in policymaking and where all Canadians have the information they need to be informed and engaged.

Science in Government

In our 2022 pre-budget consultation to the Government of Canada's Standing Committee on Finance, we recommended taking deliberate action to support and enhance the problem-solving capacity within the scientific enterprise by committing funds towards developing a National Science Strategy. The pandemic has shown us firsthand the power of streamlining our efforts and coming together to solve a defined problem with clear targets. A pan-Canadian knowledge strategy that defines the problems we are trying to solve can connect science to where it is needed most.

In the coming months, we plan to work with the new government to understand the science agenda for this session of Parliament. We're excited to see a greater focus on science in the government with the new Standing Committee on Science and Research, and will be closely following the developments to come.

Transparency

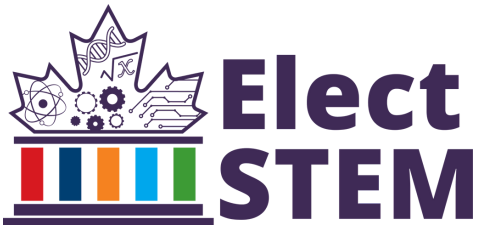
Very little data currently exists on how, when, and where evidence is used in government policy in Canada. Using the transparency framework that we established in the first part of *Eyes on Evidence,* we are currently conducting a systematic assessment to evaluate the transparency of evidence in the Canadian federal government and collecting data on how evidence is used throughout policymaking.

We hope that *Eyes on Evidence* is the beginning of a much needed public discussion, and plants a new seed for improving the relationship between science, society, and policy in Canada. The second part of *Eyes on Evidence* will be published near the end of 2021.

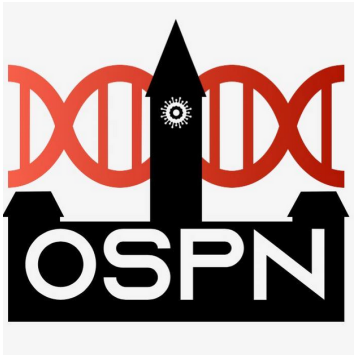
PARTNERSHIPS

Change-making is a collaborative effort. We are lucky to work with many great initiatives and organizations to boost each other's impact and strengthen our democracy. Below are a few of our incredible partners and collaborators from the past year:















FUNDING AND CONTRIBUTIONS

E4D's work is made possible thanks to generous the support of:

248 ONE-TIME DONORS

& 245 MONTHLY DONORS

E4D is also grateful for the ongoing partnerships and support of the following

foundations and government partners:

Trottier Family Foundation
Wilburforce Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Government of Canada

- Canadian Heritage
- Canada Summer Jobs
- Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC)
- Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC)

Government of British Columbia

- Professional Employees Association of British Columbia (PEA)

THANK YOU!



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