POLICIES FOR STRONG SCIENCE AND A THRIVING DEMOCRACY

2025 Federal Election

Science and research impact all Canadians. Advances in scientific research improve our health, the environment, the economy and the safety and well-being of Canadians. Building a foundation of transparent, evidence-informed decision-making in our government ensures that policy decisions are made with sound and accurate information supporting them. This builds trust in our institutions and protects government integrity. Strong science means a strong democracy and a stronger Canada.

Evidence for Democracy (E4D) is Canada's leading non-partisan, not-for-profit organization championing the integration of scientific evidence in government decision-making. Through original research, skills training, and advocacy campaigns, we foster public demand for transparent and evidence-informed policies that benefit society. By equipping the scientific community with tools and knowledge, we empower researchers to take an active role in democracy alongside us as we bridge the gap between science and policy.

E4D encourages all political candidates in this year's federal election to support policies that strengthen science, evidence-informed decision-making and a culture of transparency and openness. Here are some specific policy ideas that support these goals.

Evidence-Informed Decision-Making

Evidence helps decision-makers effectively weigh complex options, and make fully informed decisions that benefit all Canadians. It is only through access to sound evidence that governments can make the best decisions for our country and its people.

Recommendations:

1. **Implement Departmental Science Advisors in all science-based departments and agencies.** Departmental Science Advisors will support the Chief Science Advisor through a science advice network, provide subject-specific input, and bolster evidence-informed decision making.

2. The Privy Council Office, working with departmental officials and the Chief Science Advisor, should **examine mechanisms to achieve improved whole-of-government coordination and collaboration for intramural research and evidence-informed policy-making.**

3. **Make permanent the position of the federal Chief Science Advisor** through an Act of Parliament, to ensure that science and evidence remains at the core of decision-making in Ottawa.

Funding for Science and Research

Investments in research are critical for maintaining our international competitiveness, training the next generation of business and scientific leaders, and continuing to build on the many benefits that past investments in research have yielded for Canadians. Canada is currently falling behind - we are no longer in the top 30 nations in terms of total research intensity, and decisive action is needed to reassert our position as a global research powerhouse.

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Recommendations:

1. **Increase investments in intramural, investigator-led, and extramural research,** accounting for the full costs of research, in order to improve Canada's global competitiveness and ability to attract and retain top talent. Investments should include:
    - Dedicated increases in funding relating to climate science and environmental monitoring, ensuring that science-based departments and agencies have the appropriate resources needed to delivery on their mandates
    - Continued investments in the Canada Research Chairs program, ensuring that universities are able to directly manage their allocations themselves, and that universities improve reporting on how allocations were supported and delivered on key objectives
    - Dedicated funding to improve access to federal research support programs for francophone researchers, and to identify opportunities for increasing production and dissemination of knowledge and research in French in Canada

2. **Establish an advisory Council on Science and Innovation**, represented by leaders from academia, not-for-profit, and industry sectors, and task it with developing a national science and innovation strategy to increase the impact of significant federal investments

3. **Create a National Science and Innovation Strategy** to improve coordination on science and research between federal, provincial and territorial governments, between intramural and extramural researchers, and between scientists and decision-makers

Transparency and Openness

Transparency builds trust in government, provides new opportunities for collaboration, and ensures that decision makers have access to the best available information.

Recommendations:

1. **Commit to full implementation and adherence to Scientific Integrity Policies across all federal departments,** with the goal to improve effectiveness and actively promote these policies within all departments.

2. **Enhance transparency around federal decision-making processes.** This includes publicly sharing the evidence used to inform federal decisions, and communicating federal science and policy issues to the public in a way that they can understand.

3. **Undertake a comprehensive review to modernise, and where possible, harmonise the legislation for the four agencies that support extramural research,** to clarify accountabilities and selection processes, promote good governance, and prioritise inter-agency collaboration and coordination.

4. **Commit to the full development, launch, and implementation of a new National Action Plan on Open Government,** including the commitments to protect against misinformation, provide public access to climate change impact information, track government spending, and make government data more accessible.

5. **Continue to implement an Open Science approach to federally funded scientific research outputs, including:**
    - Expanding the **Federal Open Science Repository of Canada** to include additional science-based department and agencies
    - Developing **Open Science strategies** amongst additional science-based department and agencies, and continuing the renewal of current strategies

Strengthening Democratic Institutions

According to the final report from the Foreign Interference Commission, Canada's democracy is under threat. It is essential that the federal government take concrete action to safeguard and strengthen Canada's democratic institutions.

Recommendations:

1. **Create a new government entity to monitor the domestic open source online information environment for misinformation and disinformation that could impact Canadian democratic processes,** empowering it to give and receive intelligence and information with national security and intelligence agencies and international partners, as well as with appropriate civil society and private organizations.

2. **Amend the Canada Elections Act to address the threat of misinformation in elections.** This includes actions that:
    - Prohibit the spread of false information used to undermine election legitimacy;
    - Require all AI-generated or manipulated electoral content to include a transparency marker;
    - Mandate a tagline or source of information in all electoral communications by registered political entities;
    - Regulate the creation and use of manipulated or altered vocal or visual recordings of individuals during elections

3. **Amend the Elections Modernization Act to introduce a legal requirements for social media platforms to regularly disclose and archive digital ads and paid content,** including providing information on who paid for the advertisement, the advertising budget, the intended reach of the ad, use of personalisation/micro-targeting, and codes of conduct the advertiser follows.

4. Explore existing technologies and consider assisting civil society organizations (e.g. media observatories and universities) to **develop a publicly available tool to help citizens verify whether digital content is fabricated or altered.**