

February 9, 2022

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Science and Research,

My name is Rachael Maxwell. I am the Executive Director of [Evidence for Democracy](#) (E4D), a non-partisan, non-profit working to advance evidence-informed policy in governments across the Canadian federation.

At E4D, our work seeks to close the critical gap between decision-makers and the best available evidence. To do so, we've led campaigns on science advice and research funding, conducted original research on science integrity, as well as how politicians find and use evidence, and developed resources for the research community to engage in public policy.

We have been following the efforts of this Standing Committee, from the [initial motion](#) to [the meetings](#) since, with great interest. **In particular, this Tuesday evening, I noticed a theme as Members of Parliaments engaged with witnesses – that the Committee is curious about what progress has been made on the 2017 Fundamental Science Review (FSR).**

We were too. **So last fall, we carried out a [review](#) of the progress to date on the 35 recommendations in the FSR. We found that nine of the recommendations are complete, 13 are in progress, and 13 remain unresolved.** For example, the federal government has convened a [Canada Research Coordinating Committee](#), stabilized funding for investments in research infrastructure, and created a new fund to support interdisciplinary and high-risk research.

But for some recommendations, progress is stagnating or falling significantly short. The most prominent example is Canada's lagging investment in investigator-led (or fundamental) research. Fundamental research is the very foundation of a robust science and innovation ecosystem. If there are cracks in this foundation, there will be cracks throughout the system. If Canada hopes to ever catch up to its G7 peer nations, and to attract and retain the talent it needs, then investments in fundamental research need to be prioritized today.

The Committee's decision to study the successes, challenges and opportunities for science in Canada is thus a very timely one. From epidemiology to vaccines, governments across Canada have leaned heavily on science in the past years. **If the federal government hopes to continue relying on science to inform policy decisions, then support for science needs to top the list of priorities.**

Science desperately needs support, especially when it comes to investing in fundamental research. This long-standing problem is not going away – and neither is climate change, antimicrobial resistance, the potential for future pandemics and a host of other pressing issues.


In the end, the cost of not having the right evidence on hand to address these challenges will be much higher than the immediate costs of making bold, forward-thinking investments in science and research.

We have been at this crossroad before. What's different today is that people across Canada have observed in near real-time the vital difference that science can make in addressing the challenges that define our future. This in itself is an extraordinary evolution. The question now is: will our elected representatives do what is needed to carry this progress forward?

I would be happy to speak with any interested members, or the Standing Committee for Science and Research as a whole, to discuss the progress to date on the Fundamental Science Review. I look forward to discussing your support for science, evidence-informed policy, and how E4D can help.

I extend my thanks for your continued work in our democracy.

Yours sincerely,



Rachael Maxwell
Executive Director
Evidence for Democracy