

CAUT Election Tool Kit 2015

# ***On E-Day Get Science Right!***

Issues, Tools & Tactics



Canadian Association of University Teachers  
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

[www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)



# Issues, Tools & Tactics

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CAUT members care deeply about the outcome of the federal election. In 2011, the voting rate among people with a university degree was 78%, compared with less than 60% among those with a high school education or less. The voting rate of unionized workers with a post-graduate degree was even higher, at 85%.



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# 1 | Why should we care about federal politics?

CAUT members care deeply about the outcome of the federal election. In 2011, the voting rate among people with a university degree was 78%, compared with less than 60% among those with a high school education or less. The voting rate of unionized workers with a post-graduate degree was even higher, at 85%.

The policies of the federal government affect academic staff and their work in many ways, from the impact of anti-terrorism legislation on academic freedom to investments in research and support for university and college funding. Since 2007, the federal Conservative government has set a clear direction in science policy that favors narrow commercial interests at the expense of the broader public interest. They have directed funding away from basic, discovery-driven research and government science to market-driven research mainly benefiting industry interests. They have politicized research funding by intervening directly and indirectly into what and who gets funded. They have eliminated crucial data collection tools, like the long-form Census, and have muzzled government scientists.

Through its *Get Science Right* campaign, CAUT and its members have been calling for a new direction in science policy in Canada. We are asking for a policy:

- Where discovery-driven research is appropriately funded, and drives innovations in Canada;
- Where scientists and researchers, not politicians and CEOs, decide what and who gets funded;
- Where facts are collected and findings are shared in the best interest of the public;

- Where the government also invests in government research, and;
- Where government scientists can share their findings without reprisal.

Elections are about choices; a decision to stay on the same path or to go on a different path; a decision to do nothing or to act; a decision to watch and listen or to engage and discuss. The period leading up to a federal election is a great opportunity to listen to members' concerns on key federal policies, and put forward ideas for discussion. This is why we encourage CAUT's members to organize activities on campus to discuss the implications of the current science policy in Canada and share CAUT's view about a new direction in science policy.

To do so, you will find in this kit the following tools:

- Key messages about CAUT's *Get Science Right* campaign
- How-to guide to implement an effective on campus membership canvassing
- Other ideas to engage members in the federal election

For more information and support, contact CAUT's Director of Research and Political Action (contact info at [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)).



## 2 | Key Messages about CAUT's *Get Science Right!* campaign

### The current federal S&T policy has not delivered more investment in R&D or produced more jobs

One of the cornerstones of the current federal government's science and technology (S&T) strategy is to require universities and colleges to collaborate with industry on scientific research. The assumption is that these partnerships will increase business investment in R&D and promote commercial innovation that will increase economic growth and create more jobs.

After eight years, it must be recognized that this approach has failed. Canada's science and technology strategy is not delivering the promised investments and jobs.

According to the latest data from Statistics Canada:

- Business investment in R&D has decreased drastically, from \$17 to \$14 billion between 2006 and 2013 (-17.7%), after inflation;
- Total investment in R&D in Canada was \$27.7 billion in 2013 compared to \$30 billion in 2006 (-7.7%), after inflation;
- Investments made by the federal government in government research is also down by 6.1% since 2007, after inflation;
- About 4,000 government scientists were let go as a result of federal cuts in recent years.

Even the federal government in its 2014 Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy recognized its failure and the decline in investments with respect to R&D:

"We see that while businesses in OECD countries spend an average of 1.63 percent of GDP on R&D, in Canada, the figure was

only 1.11 percent in 2006 (\$16.5 billion) and this fell to 0.88 percent (\$16.2 billion) by 2012. Out of 34 OECD countries, this drop takes us from 16th to 22nd place," (2014 S&T Strategy, page 8).

Recent spending announcements will do little to reverse the problem. Budget 2015 announced just \$150 million per year over ten years for the Canada First Excellence Research Fund and \$220 million per year over six years for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. Much more needs to be done to repair the damage done to Canada's research infrastructure.

### What we want:

- The federal government should restore the level of investment in R&D to what was spent a decade ago to remain competitive with other developed countries. We would need to spend at least \$2.5 billion of new R&D money in 2015/16 to match 2006 R&D spending in Canada.

### Underfunding discovery-driven research limits innovation, and job growth

The current federal government has underfunded discovery-driven research and government research, while increasing support for market-driven research.

- In 2008-09, about 60 percent of NSERC's research project funding was dedicated to basic "unfettered" research.
- In the 2014/15 fiscal year, "fettered" research received about the same level of funding as

discovery grants, after an increase of 30% since 2008-09 when adjusted for inflation.

- Meanwhile, the value of discovery grants dropped by 8% during the same period.

One impact of the declining support for discovery-driven research has been a marked decline in the number of promising research projects that can be funded. The success rate for NSERC's Discovery Grants has fallen from 71% in 2008 to 65% in 2015. The success rate for SSHRC's standard research grant, now called the Insight Grant, has dropped from 40% in 2006 to just 23% in 2014. For CIHR, the percentage of successful applicants is 18% in 2014, down from 31% in 2009.

Underfunding discovery-driven research is dangerous, and can limit innovation and job growth. A narrowing focus on commercialization removes the creativity and unexpected discovery key to discovery-driven research and innovation, and distorts the focus of scientific investigation.

In the area of medical research, for instance, the obsession with commercial outcomes has placed an emphasis on minor modifications to existing drugs and devices, rather than fundamental explorations of disease prevention and population health.

We should remember that discovery-driven research led to many key unanticipated innovations such as X-rays, nylon, Teflon, GPS technology, informatics, superconductivity and medical imaging.

#### What we want:

Strong public investment in discovery-driven research will create social and economic benefits for everyone.

- The federal government should re-invest in discovery-driven research and substantially increase the base funding of the three

federal research granting councils (SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR).

## Scientists and researchers, not CEOs and politicians, should decide who gets research funding

To facilitate the transfer of funding from discovery-driven research to market-driven research, the federal government has changed the composition of the boards of the granting councils, appointing industry and political figures at the expense of scientific experts. Furthermore, public agencies such as the National Research Council are seeing their mandates narrowed and explicitly tied to industrial interests.

When governments bind research too closely to industry needs or political preferences, clear dangers arise. The commercialization of research can undermine the integrity of public research. Industrial partners, interested in preserving their commercial interests, have attempted to suppress or delay the publication of research results. A narrow focus on commercial outcomes can steer research away from inquiry that promises public benefit but offers little promise of profit.

The history of scientific progress has shown that the economic, social and environmental benefits of research can only be fully realized if governments recognize that good research does not emerge from political diktats or narrow industrial demands. The value of scientific studies and projects is best assessed by impartial experts through peer review, not by politicians or special interests.

#### What we want:

Canadians and their elected representatives need unbiased and non-partisan advice on science policy.

- The federal government should review its science policy based on the principle that research funding decisions should be free from political or industry influence.
- Scientists and researchers, not CEOs and politicians, should decide who gets research funding.
- The federal government should create a Parliamentary Science Officer (PSO), an independent officer of the Library of Parliament who would report to the Senate and the House of Commons. The PSO would provide independent advice and analysis to Parliament about the adequacy and effectiveness of the nation's scientific policies, priorities, and funding.

### Evidence, not ideology, should inform policy

Too often, research investments have been made to meet political, not scientific, goals. For instance, the most recent S&T announcements introducing Advance Manufacturing as a priority research area is clearly designed to meet the current federal government's political objectives in Southern Ontario in this election year.

The government has also cut scientific staff and programs, including the long-form Census, mainly for ideological reasons. Canadians face major challenges that require sound scientific solutions including those related to climate change, energy demand, public health, and drug safety.

Government departments and agencies, such as Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Statistics Canada and the National Research Council (NRC) have a vital role to play in confronting these challenges, but can only do so when they are adequately funded and free to pursue their work.

### What we want:

- The federal government should reinstate the long-form Census.
- The federal government should reinvest in its own research programs to provide the public with reliable and independent scientific knowledge and advice.

### Muzzling scientists could harm public health, safety or the environment

The federal government has placed unacceptable political controls on public science. It has muzzled scientists and politicized the research carried out by its departments and public agencies.

A major survey of federal government scientists commissioned by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) found that:

- 90% feel they are not allowed to speak freely to the media about the work they do;
- Faced with a departmental decision that could harm public health, safety or the environment, about 86% would face censure or retaliation for doing so;
- The survey found that nearly three out of every four federal scientists (74%) believe the sharing of scientific findings has become too restricted in the past five years;
- Nearly the same number (71%) believes political interference has compromised Canada's ability to develop policy, law and programs based on scientific evidence.

### What we want:

- To serve the public interest, government scientists must be free to speak publicly about their findings.



## 3 | Sample questions for candidates

### 1/ Funding research

In the last 8 years, the federal government has underfunded discovery-driven research and government research to fund market-driven research while promising that it would stimulate R&D investments in the economy, and create more jobs.

#### Facts:

- According to the latest data from Statistics Canada, business investment in R&D has decreased drastically, from \$17 to \$14 billion spent between 2006 and 2013, after inflation;
- Total investments in R&D in Canada were \$27.7 billion in 2013 compared to \$30 billion in 2006 (2007 dollars), after inflation;
- Investments made by the federal government in government research is also down by 6.1% since 2007, after inflation;
- About 4,000 government scientists were let go as a result of federal cuts in recent years.

**Question:** To restore the level of investment in R&D in Canada back to the level observed in 2006, and to achieve our short and long term economic potential, we would need to spend at least \$2.5 billion of new R&D money in 2015 alone, when adjusted for inflation. How do you propose to do that?

### 2/ Discovery-driven research

Underfunding discovery-driven research can limit innovation and job growth. A narrow focus on commercialization undermines the creativity and unexpected discovery key to basic research.

In the area of medical research, for instance, the obsession with commercial outcomes has encouraged an emphasis on minor modifications to existing drugs and devices, rather than fundamental explorations of disease prevention and population health.

We should remember that discovery-driven research led to many key unanticipated innovations such as X-rays, nylon, Teflon, GPS technology, informatics, superconductivity and medical imaging.

**Question:** What do you think should be the role of the federal government in funding discovery-driven research?

### 3/ Peer-review process / Academic Freedom

The federal government has changed the composition of the boards of the granting councils by appointing industry and political figures at the expense of scientific experts.

Furthermore, public agencies such as the National Research Council are seeing their mandate narrowed and explicitly tied to industrial interests. When governments bind research too closely to industry needs or political preferences, clear dangers arise. The commercialization of research undermines the integrity of public research. Industrial partners, interested in preserving their commercial interests, have attempted to suppress or delay the publication of research results. A narrow focus on commercial outcomes steer research away from inquiry that promises public benefit but offers little promise of profit.

**Questions:**

- What you think should be done to give the power back to scientists to decide what research proposals get funded?
- What would you do to protect the academic freedom of college and university researchers?

#### 4/ Unbiased and non-partisan advice on science policy

Canadians and their elected representatives need unbiased and non-partisan advice on science policy. The Office of the National Science Advisor was designed to fill this role, however imperfectly, until it was eliminated in 2008 by the Conservative government.

**Questions:**

- What would you do to guarantee that parliamentarians get sound advice on science policy?
- What would you do to bring more facts into policy development?
- Will you bring back the long-form Census?

#### 5/ Muzzled scientists

A major survey of federal government scientists commissioned by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) found that:

- 90% feel they are not allowed to speak freely to the media about the work they do, and if faced with a departmental decision that could harm public health, safety or the environment, 86% feel they would face censure or retaliation for doing so;
- 74% believe the sharing of scientific findings has become too restricted in the past five years;
- 71% believe political interference has compromised Canada's ability to develop

policy, law and programs based on scientific evidence.

**Questions:**

- Under your government, will government scientists be free to speak publicly about their findings?
- What will you do to protect that freedom?

## 4 | Let's talk about science policy on campus

### Action Guide for local leaders

Elections are about choices:

- Do nothing or act;
- Stay on current path or go on a different path;
- Watch and listen, or engage and discuss.

The period leading up to a federal election is a great opportunity to listen to members' concerns on key federal policies, and put forward ideas for discussion. But these discussions won't take place without local leaders and activists taking steps to facilitate membership engagement.

Here are few key steps you can take today to organize activities on campus to discuss some of the implications of the current federal science policy and share CAUT's *Get Science Right* messages.

### Step 1/ Convene an election planning meeting with all local leaders, stewards, activists and staff

At the meeting:

- Share the fact that more than 80% of unionized post-secondary graduates voted in the last federal election.
- Discuss in detail key issues that might be raised during the next federal election, such as the federal science policy and CAUT's *Get Science Right* campaign.
- Underline the need for your local association to get involved in the federal campaign.
- Propose to engage members directly as the most effective way to make a difference.

- Highlight the positive outcome of membership engagement for other activities, such as collective bargaining.
- Ask for a commitment from everyone at the meeting to help engage members in the next federal election, and discuss how to distribute the workload of each so that this campaign can be the number one priority between now and Election Day.
- Highlight the need to get more activists onboard and plan strategies and tactics to identify "engagers" in your election plan.

### Step 2/ Get more activists involved and identify "engagers"

Many activities can be organized to identify potential activists and future "engagers". When coordinating these activities, please consider the following:

- Organize activities on specific issues of interest that might be discussed during a federal election. For instance, organizing a *Get Science Right* event can engage and educate members on the orientation of the federal government's science policy, and help identify future activists for your election plan.
- Request CAUT'S post-card on *Get Science Right* to help keep track of activists willing to get involved.
- Build a list of activists for the campaign. Look for diverse new leaders and activists.
- Contact them shortly after they volunteered and invite them to a follow-up meeting/training session (as outlined below).

### Step 3/ Make a detailed plan to engage members from now until the election

- Engage your key activists in developing a membership engagement plan.
- Map your membership; make a workplace diagram of who works where and who knows who.
- Make a detailed plan of who will talk with each member. Take advantage of identified “engagers”. Plan to have at least two conversations with each member before the election.
- Overcome barriers that may have excluded some members. For instance, for members without an office or who are not regularly on-campus, plan alternative means of communications.
- Assign a full-time organiser(s).
- Ask CAUT for campaign and training material.
- Organize a meeting of all your activists and “engagers” to plan membership engagement activities. Set up teams.
- Provide training on the issue(s) and discussion of communications skills, especially listening skills.

### Step 4/ Put your plan into motion immediately

- “Engagers” should start by discussing the campaign issues with members who already value the association, and try to increase the number of “engagers”.
- Then, engage other members first on their workplace issues. Follow-up and support members’ issues rapidly, if possible.
- When possible, link members’ issue to the federal election (e.g.: lack of research funding and the impact on career opportunities and academic freedom).
- Put together a reporting system to keep track of each conversation, and where members

might fall on specific issues such as the current federal government science policy.

- Provide support and follow-up to your “engagers”.

### Step 5/ Work with other groups and be visible

- Using your reporting system as a means to maximize time and resources, make sure to get back for a second and third visit, encouraging members to think about ongoing workplace issues that may be affected by the outcome of the election. Factsheets on specific issues, such as *Get Science Right* are available from CAUT.
- Do not hesitate to work with other unions and other groups.
- Promote the issues using your communications tools (website, newspaper, and so on), and during meetings and events
- Encourage members supporting your association’s position to vote, and vote in their best interest in the upcoming election.

For support, contact CAUT’s mobilizing officer (contact info at [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)).

## 5 | Other ideas of activities during an election year

There are many ways to get science policy issues onto the election agenda. It can be as simple as talking to your members about the election or as ambitious as organizing an all-candidates forum. What you can do depends upon the amount of time, resources and volunteers you have. The following are some tools and tactics you might employ.

### Talk to candidates on the doorstep

When candidates come canvassing, ask them about their position on post-secondary education issues. Explain the challenges you, your colleagues, and your students face. Suggest what the federal government should be doing to better support universities and colleges. Use the sample questions provided in this kit.

### Meet the candidates

A private meeting with local candidates can be an effective way of educating them on the issues. Report on the results of your meeting to your members and the media.

### Issue an election newsletter

Use your academic staff association newsletter and website to inform your members about the key election issues affecting post-secondary education. You can provide information about where the parties stand. Also, inform members about how they can ensure they are on the voters list and encourage them to vote.

### Sector meetings with candidates

A sector meeting is one where a coalition of education organizations (K-12 teachers, public school unions, faculty associations, support staff

and students) meets as a group with each candidate. These meetings can be private, but often reporters are invited to attend.

### Organize telephone calls to candidates

Recruit members and allies to make telephone calls to the offices of local candidates to express concern about post-secondary education issues. During an election campaign, each telephone call to a candidate is logged by issue — the more calls a candidate receives on an issue, the more likely he or she will see it as a priority.

### Attend all-candidates meetings

Several all-candidates meetings will likely be held in your local riding during the election campaign. Use these opportunities to organize a group to attend and ask questions about where the candidates stand on key post-secondary education and labour issues.

For support, contact CAUT's membership engagement officer (contact info at [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)).



## 6 | More campaign tools & tactics

It helps to get creative when trying to get your issues onto the election agenda. Here are some creative campaign tactics and tools to try.

### Pledge cards

A more creative way to ensure post-secondary education is an issue in your riding is to ask candidates to sign a pledge about what they would do, if elected, to assist universities and colleges. Such a pledge might be to support CAUT's *Get Science Right* campaign goals, the proposed Post-Secondary Education Act, or a national tuition freeze. If a candidate agrees to sign a pledge, turn the signing into a media event. Publicize who has and who hasn't signed the pledge card. Example:

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, candidate for \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, stand for a federal science policy where discovery-driven research is adequately funded, and drives innovation in Canada. I believe scientists, not CEOs, should decide what and who gets funded. I believe facts, not ideology, should influence policy orientations in the best interest of the public, and to do so, the federal government must collect facts, invest in its own research, and allow government scientists to share findings without reprisal.**

### Report cards

An effective way to highlight concerns during an election is to grade the candidates on where they stand on the issues. You may find it useful to issue a report card on your candidates' positions on post-secondary education.

You can submit written questions to candidates, asking them what they would do to deal with

the main issues of concern to colleges and universities — early childhood education, tuition fees and access to post-secondary education, precarious work, research funding, and retirement security — and other issues of concern to your members.

Based on the responses you receive, give each candidate a grade. Publicize the report card with the media and with your members.

### Winning media coverage

Competition for media attention during an election campaign can be intense. However, with some creativity and planning, you'll find there are a number of ways you can win media coverage for your issues.

Letters to the editor are a simple and fairly easy way to highlight your concerns. You may also wish to submit an op-ed to your local newspapers on why post-secondary education is an important election issue in your community. Don't forget to make full use of your campus and community media. Also, amplify your message by using social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

There are more creative events and actions that can be organized to grab the attention of the media. To highlight the issue of student debt, for instance, you could organize a group to pull a ball and chain across campus. Or you could organize a mock funeral mourning the death of basic research in Canada. Be sure to take plenty of pictures and videos and share them through social media.

For support, contact CAUT's communication officer (contact info at [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)).



## Resources

- Get Science Right: [www.getscienceright.ca](http://www.getscienceright.ca)
- Analysis of the 2014 federal S&T policy: [http://www.caut.ca/docs/default-source/reports/governmentreport\\_feb2015\\_v5.pdf?sfvrsn=4](http://www.caut.ca/docs/default-source/reports/governmentreport_feb2015_v5.pdf?sfvrsn=4)
- Analysis of the 2015 federal budget: [http://www.caut.ca/docs/default-source/better-funding/caut-response---2015-2016-federal-budget-\(2015-04\)f48634f1c6ef6d389810ff00005eecd3.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.caut.ca/docs/default-source/better-funding/caut-response---2015-2016-federal-budget-(2015-04)f48634f1c6ef6d389810ff00005eecd3.pdf?sfvrsn=0)
- Campaign material for Academic Staff Associations: <https://www.caut.ca/member/login>
  - Draft press release
  - Q&A on Fair Election Act
  - Factsheets on key science policy issues
  - Posters and other promotional material (Door Hanger)
- Canada's Past Matters: [www.canadaspastmatters.ca](http://www.canadaspastmatters.ca)

## Contact

- Campaign coordination – contact: Sylvain Schetagne, CAUT Political Action and Research Director, [schetagne@caut.ca](mailto:schetagne@caut.ca)
- Events and On-Campus Canvassing – contact: Robert Ramsay, CAUT Mobilizing Officer, [ramsay@caut.ca](mailto:ramsay@caut.ca)
- Building Stronger Associations Workshop – contact: Robert Ramsay, CAUT Mobilizing Officer, [ramsay@caut.ca](mailto:ramsay@caut.ca)
- Communications and Media Relations Workshop – contact: Angela Regnier, CAUT Communications Officer, [regnier@caut.ca](mailto:regnier@caut.ca)
- Policy research – contact: Robert Johnson, CAUT Policy Officer, [johnson@caut.ca](mailto:johnson@caut.ca)