

## **News Release**

For Immediate Release

### **Government of Canada announces major steps in treating and preventing COVID-19 through vaccines and therapies**

August 5, 2020 – Ottawa, Ontario – Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

The Government of Canada is aggressively pursuing the purchase and development of COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and related supplies to protect Canadians and is working to strengthen Canada's biomanufacturing sector. This includes engaging with international and domestic scientists and with businesses and manufacturers that are stepping up to fight COVID-19. The Government of Canada is investing in projects that will position Canada at the forefront of the global race to find a treatment and a vaccine for COVID-19, while building domestic capabilities to fight future pandemics.

The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (ISED), and the Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of Public Services and Procurement (PSPC), today announced several measures being taken by the Government of Canada to secure a future supply of COVID-19 vaccine and therapies.

Minister Bains unveiled the members of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, who are advising the Government on how best to support vaccine research in Canada and help ensure Canadian leadership in vaccine development, related bio-manufacturing and international partnerships to secure access for Canadians to safe and effective products.

The Vaccine Task Force includes vaccine and immunology experts, as well as industry leaders with a proven ability in developing and commercializing vaccines. The co-chairs are Joanne Langley, Head of Infectious Diseases at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax and Professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University, and J. Mark Lievonen, former President of Sanofi Pasteur Limited in Canada.

Task Force members have reviewed vaccine and bio-manufacturing applications from domestic candidates for which it has provided advice to the ministers of ISED and Health on the most promising options aimed at providing Canadians with safe, effective vaccines as soon as possible, as well as a robust manufacturing sector to increase secure access to vaccine production. The Task Force has also provided scientific and technical advice to the government on a portfolio of leading international vaccine candidates.

Minister Anand announced that, following the careful review and recommendation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, the Government of Canada has entered into two agreements with Pfizer and Moderna to secure millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccine candidates. Pfizer will supply its BNT162 mRNA-based vaccine candidate, while Moderna will provide its mRNA-1273 vaccine candidate. All potential vaccines will require Health Canada regulatory approval prior to being used to vaccinate Canadians. Active negotiations with other potential vaccine suppliers are also under way.

The Government is negotiating and signing agreements with a number of leading pharmaceutical companies to establish a guaranteed supply base of potential vaccine candidates.

PSPC is also procuring the equipment and supplies that will be needed to perform the final manufacturing and packaging stages of vaccine production in Canada, as well as the materials needed to support safe, efficient immunization such as syringes, needles, alcohol swabs and other supplies.

In addition, following the recommendation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, Minister Bains announced an investment of up to \$56 million to support clinical trials for a COVID-related vaccine candidate from [Variation Biotechnologies Inc.](#) (VBI) through the Strategic Innovation Fund. VBI's project is in direct response to the global fight against COVID-19 and contributes to Canada's ability to secure an effective vaccine. This investment is funded from the Government's \$600 million to support COVID-19-related

vaccine and therapy clinical trials led by the private sector and to support Canadian bio-manufacturing opportunities. Other projects are still under consideration.

Minister Bains also announced the members of the COVID-19 Therapeutics Task Force. The Therapeutics Task Force is providing expert advice to the Government on the development of COVID-19 treatments, including how best to prioritize financial support for promising COVID-19 treatment projects. The Task Force includes experts drawn from research and industry who have a proven ability to develop and bring new therapies to market in Canada. The Therapeutics Task Force is co-chaired by Nancy Harrison, Director and Past Chair of LifeSciences BC, and Cédric Bisson, Partner at Teralys Capital.

From the beginning, the Government has worked across all departments and agencies to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19 with the goal of protecting the health of all Canadians. Today, the Government also announced investments that will help support the development of and access to treatments for COVID-19, including:

- Support of more than \$3 million for Nova Scotia-based [IMV Inc.](#) to advance clinical development of its vaccine candidate for the prevention of COVID-19 infection. This support is being provided with contributions from the [National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program](#) and [the Next Generation Manufacturing Canada Supercluster](#).
- Support of more than \$19 million in funding through the [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada](#) (NSERC), in collaboration with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), to leverage the expertise of researchers in the natural sciences and engineering and their partners across Canada to address this unprecedented crisis. This investment will support 369 COVID-19 research projects, including work related to vaccines.

## Quotes

“The Government is committed to protecting the health and safety of Canadians. That’s why we are working hard on all possible fronts to deliver safe and effective treatments and vaccines against COVID-19 for Canadians as fast as possible. Guided by the expertise of these task forces, which has informed the VBI investment announced today, we are leaving no stone unturned in exploring every promising option to enhance our research and development capacity for long-term emergency preparedness.”  
– The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been working diligently to secure the necessary personal protective equipment and supplies needed to protect frontline healthcare workers and combat COVID-19. While that work continues, we are now squarely focused on preparing Canada for an eventual vaccine. Given intense global competition, we are taking an aggressive approach to secure access to the most promising candidates so that we will be ready to vaccinate all Canadians as quickly as possible. We are extremely pleased to establish these agreements with Pfizer and Moderna. Canadians can rest assured that the Government will continue to do everything possible to keep them healthy and safe.”  
– The Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of Public Services and Procurement

“Canada has flattened the curve, but COVID-19 remains dangerous without a vaccine. Over the last months, our government has been investing to fight this virus. We have been committing important funding toward research and preparedness to develop a vaccine and treatments. Today’s announcements will build on the work already started to support COVID-19 research in Canada and will give us more chances of having a vaccine and treatments.”  
– The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health

## Quick facts

- On [April 23, 2020, the Government of Canada announced more than \\$1 billion in support of the Plan to Mobilize Science](#) to fight COVID-19 that includes developing vaccines, producing treatments and

tracking the virus. This includes \$600 million through the Strategic Innovation Fund to support COVID-19 vaccine and therapy clinical trials led by the private sector, as well as to support Canadian biomanufacturing opportunities. The Strategic Innovation Fund contribution to VBI is part of this plan.

- This investment in VBI is part of the Government of Canada's ongoing commitment to protect the health and safety of Canadians and to Canada's economy. This investment will help create and maintain up to 30 full-time jobs.
- [The COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force](#), with a secretariat supported by the National Research Council of Canada, is mandated to provide advice to the Government of Canada on developing and producing COVID-19 vaccines.
- The COVID-19 Therapeutics Task Force, supported by a secretariat housed at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, is mandated to provide advice to the Government of Canada on COVID-19 therapeutics.
- At this time, there are no vaccines authorized for the prevention of COVID-19, but there are many in clinical trials or in development. For each candidate vaccine, once additional studies have been completed, Health Canada will review evidence of safety, efficacy and manufacturing quality to make a decision on whether the individual vaccines will be approved for use in Canada.
- The Vaccine Task Force will be in place for at least twelve months, and the Therapeutics Task Force for at least six months, subject to extension at the discretion of the Government of Canada. Both task forces meet regularly as needed.
- Public Services and Procurement Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada are working together, along with the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, to prepare for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and related supplies.
- As active negotiations with other potential vaccine suppliers are under way, the Government of Canada cannot disclose contract details at this time.
- Pfizer is a biopharmaceutical company involved in the discovery, development and manufacture of health care products, including medicines and vaccines.
- Moderna is a biotechnology company focused on the discovery and development of medicines and vaccines made of messenger RNA.

### **Associated links**

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Helping Canadians with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Prime Minister outlines Canada's COVID-19 response](#)
- [Prime Minister announces new actions under Canada's COVID-19 response](#)
- [Prime Minister announces more support for workers and businesses through Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#)
- [Prime Minister announces Canada's Plan to Mobilize Science to fight COVID-19](#)
- [Prime Minister announces Canada's Plan to Mobilize Industry to fight COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force](#)
- [COVID-19 Therapeutics Task Force](#)

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