



Innovation, Science and  
Economic Development Canada

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Développement économique Canada

## **Speaking Notes**

**The Honourable Navdeep Bains, PC, MP  
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry**

**Vaccine Task Force + Therapeutics Task Force  
Announcement**

**Toronto, Ontario  
August 5 or 6 **TBC**, 2020**

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**Canada**

Good morning/afternoon, everyone.

Over the past months, our government has been doing whatever it takes to protect the health of Canadians and the Canadian economy.

Our call out to Canadian businesses has seen thousands respond with offers to help.

Hundreds of firms have pivoted toward making face shields and masks, gowns, ventilators and hand sanitizer to help keep frontline healthcare workers safe.

We will need these products once we reopen the economy safely as well.

I have been extremely proud of how Canadians across the country have responded as we navigate this “new normal,” as some call it.

Of course, we all want to return to our places of work, our places of gathering, our schools, and so on.

As we continue to boost our COVID-19 testing numbers, we recognize that a true return to normal requires a targeted approach to vaccine development.

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To support this critical effort, we made several early investments targeting vaccine development.

On April 23, the Government announced a 1.1-billion-dollar package with new funding for vaccine development, the production of treatments and new measures to track the virus.

Included here is more vaccine development funding for VIDO-InterVac and the NRC's Human Health Therapeutics biomanufacturing facility in Montreal.

Also included is funding for genome sequencing efforts through the Canadian COVID Genomics Network, led by Genome Canada.

The package contains 600 million dollars through the Strategic Innovation Fund to

help Canadian firms fast-track vaccine and therapy clinical trials, and create biomanufacturing opportunities.

And finally, it includes nearly 115 million dollars for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to fund research that will achieve better medical and social countermeasures.

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I should note that our early action on vaccines was complemented by a 175 million-dollar-investment in a promising antibody treatment through technology developed by Vancouver's AbCellera.

The company is deploying new technologies to identify antibodies by leveraging machine learning.

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Building on this early momentum, I'm pleased to acknowledge the tremendous work being undertaken by Canada's COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force.

Since June, these vaccine and immunology experts and industry leaders have been providing advice to the Government on focusing our investments in projects with the greatest chance of success.

As we work to develop domestic capacity, the Task Force is also helping identify and

connect with international vaccine candidates of interest to Canada.

Minister Anand just gave us some great news on that front, and we are very happy about that.

At the end of the day, our goal is to be able to get a safe, effective vaccine to Canadians as quickly as possible.

We will also make sure that we will be able to produce a vaccine in the needed quantities to protect all Canadians.

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Leading the Task Force are co-chairs, Dr. Joanne Langley and Mark Lievonen.

Dr. Langley is the Division Head of Infectious Diseases at the IWK Health Care Centre in Halifax, and a Professor of Pediatrics and Community Health and Epidemiology within Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine.

And Mr. Lievonen is the former President of Sanofi Pasteur Limited, the Canadian vaccine division of Sanofi.

On behalf of the Minister of Health, I can say we are very pleased these two leaders are steering the Task Force, and we look forward to working with all its members in the year ahead.

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Canadians will be glad to hear that the Task Force has already reviewed 40 funding applications, and has made its first recommendations to the Government on promising vaccine candidates.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that we have followed their expert advice, and have invested up to \$56 million to support clinical trials Variation Biotechnologies Inc.

The company is developing a COVID-19 vaccine at its Ottawa research facility.

Through the Strategic Innovation Fund, the Government will support VBI's work through pre-clinical studies and clinical trials.

I am also in a position to announce federal funding for another vaccine candidate coming out of IMV, based in Nova Scotia.

IMV is receiving more than 3 million dollars to establish a complete end-to-end Canadian supply chain for its DPX-COVID-19 vaccine.

As the company works on clinical trials and manufacturing scale-up, we expect this project to greatly increase our domestic vaccine capacity.

A big thank-you goes to the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program, and Next Generation Manufacturing Canada, also known as the NGen Supercluster, who are

contributing federal advice and funding related to this project.

Let me congratulate the teams at both VBI and IMV. I will be watching your progress closely.

\*pause\*

One last piece of vaccine news comes from our friends at the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

I'm happy to tell you NSERC, in collaboration with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, has committed 19 million dollars to support

369 COVID-related research projects, including work on vaccines.

For example, researchers at McMaster University are working on developing an oral delivery system for COVID-19 vaccines using thin polymer strips. Meanwhile, Lambton College is partnering with Mediphage Bioceuticals to develop a safe and effective potential vaccine and booster.

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So that's a lot of progress on vaccines, but we all know that vaccines are not developed overnight.

And the truth is that – until we can immunize – we must also focus on

producing treatments for those who contract the virus.

Such therapeutic technologies and drugs will save lives and limit the impacts of this pandemic.

And so, I am pleased to announce today the establishment of the COVID-19 Therapeutics Task Force.

Co-chaired by Nancy Harrison, a Director and Past Chair of LifeSciences BC, and Cédric Bisson, Partner at Teralys Capital, the Task Force will assess and prioritize COVID-19 therapeutic projects seeking government support.

On behalf of the Minister of Health, I'd like to thank these scientific and industry leaders for stepping forward. We certainly look forward to continuing to work with the Therapeutics Task Force in the year ahead.

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In wrapping up, I want to express my gratitude to everyone who has been contributing over the past months — our researchers, entrepreneurs, businesses large and small.

Today's announcements are further proof of their commitment to Canadians.

Our work continues, as we make further investments in support of the search for safe and effective treatments and vaccines.

Thank you very much.

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