



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
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Canada

Good morning, everyone.

Over the past months, our government has been singularly focused on protecting the health of Canadians and the Canadian economy.

I'm here today to talk about the diligent, life saving work of Canada's scientific community. You have spent many sleepless nights in your labs or at your desks helping us fight this pandemic. I want to acknowledge that our efforts wouldn't be possible without yours. Thank you.

While we have many tools at our disposal to help fight COVID-19, we understand that the one that will get us all back to our day to day lives as we know them is a safe,

effective vaccine we can deliver to all Canadians.

That's why today, I'm excited to highlight the tremendous work being undertaken by both Canada's COVID-19 Vaccine and Therapeutic Task Forces.

Since June, these scientific experts and industry leaders have been providing advice and recommendations to the Government on how to target our investments in projects with the greatest chance of success. They have been working tirelessly and around the clock to deliver for Canadians.

Our government has always firmly believed in the role of science in good decision-making. Now, arguably more than ever, it's

incredibly important that we make evidence based decisions based on the recommendations of our Canadian world-class scientists.

Let me begin with our Vaccine Task Force. Leading this 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.

Au nom du ministre de la Santé, je peux dire que nous sommes ravis que ces deux experts exceptionnels dirigent cet Groupe de travail, et l'approche du Canada en matière de vaccin est entre leurs mains très compétentes.

On behalf of the Minister of Health, I can say we are thrilled these two exceptional experts are steering the Task Force, and Canada's approach to a vaccine is in their very capable hands.

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Today, I'm pleased to announce that we have followed their expert advice. We are investing nearly \$56 million to support clinical trials Variation Biotechnologies Inc. VBI.

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 on pre-clinical studies and clinical trials.

More investments will follow based on the continued work of the Task Forces. And I look forward to announcing additional Strategic Innovation Fund projects in the near future.

As we continue our work to develop a Made-in-Canada solution, the Task Force is also helping to 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.

We are also making sure that we will be able to produce a vaccine at the scale necessary to protect all Canadians.

At the end of the day, our government's goal is to deliver a safe, effective vaccine to all Canadians as soon as possible.

En fin de compte, l'objectif de notre gouvernement est de fournir un vaccin sûr et efficace à tous les Canadiens le plus rapidement possible.

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With this in mind, we made several early investments targeting vaccine development.

On April 23, we announced a 1.1-billion-dollar package with new funding for vaccine development, treatment research and production, and new and improved measures to track the spread of the virus.

We also dedicated nearly 115 million dollars for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to fund vaccine related research,

and a 175 million-dollar-investment in a promising antibody treatment through technology developed by Vancouver's AbCellera, which is now entering phase three of clinical trials.

Today, I'm announcing additional federal funding for vaccine research here at home.

Another Canadian vaccine candidate: IMV, is receiving more than 3 million dollars, through the IRAP program and our NGEN supercluster, to establish a complete Canadian supply chain for its DPX-COVID-19 vaccine.

As the company works on clinical trials and manufacturing scale-up, this project will help to boost our domestic vaccine capacity.

Let me congratulate the teams at both VBI and IMV on your exceptional work to keep Canadians safe. I will be watching your progress closely.

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As we all know, both fundamental and applied research stemming from Canada's world-class post-secondary institutions continues to be critical to our COVID-19 response.

I'm happy to share that NSERC, in collaboration with the SSHRC and the CIHR, Canada's 3 main research councils, have committed 19 million dollars to support 369 COVID-related research projects, including work on vaccines.

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

Until we can immunize all Canadians – we must also focus on producing treatments for those who contract the virus.

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

And so, I am pleased to announce today that we have also established 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.

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To sum up, I want to express my gratitude to the many Canadians who have stepped up to help in the fight against COVID-19. Today, I have the distinct pleasure of highlighting the lifesaving work of our world-class scientists in Canada, who are helping

us make the best possible decisions to keep Canadians healthy and safe.

And let me underline that today's investments in vaccines and therapies are only the first in a series. Negotiations are already well advanced for further investments in Canadian and international vaccine candidates and therapies.

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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