
SUBJECT /SUJET**B4 - PAYMENTS FOR THE SERO-SURVEILLANCE CONSORTIUM
PURSUANT TO THE *PUBLIC HEALTH EVENTS OF NATIONAL
CONCERN PAYMENTS ACT* - TABLING OF THE 2020–21
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)**

ISSUE

Why is the Public Health Agency of Canada requesting \$200 million for the sero-surveillance consortium in the 2020–21 Supplementary Estimates (A)?

RÉPONSE / RESPONSE

- A core responsibility of the Public Health Agency of Canada is to protect Canadians from infectious diseases by predicting, detecting, assessing, and responding to outbreaks and new threats, and contributing to the prevention, control and reduction of the spread of infectious disease among Canadians and in the global context.
- Establishing a Canadian COVID-19 Immunity Task Force will connect and leverage expertise to deliver a coordinated agenda, using serological surveillance (testing of antibodies in the blood), to measure the scope and scale and rapidly feed this information to decision-makers.
- As Canada moves beyond the first wave of COVID-19, there is a critical gap in our understanding of the degree of immunity to COVID-19 in the general population and in high risk subpopulations.
- On April 23rd, 2020, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force to fill this knowledge gap and support governments in preparing for the coming months as the economy is carefully re-opened.
- The Task Force will provide governments and Canadians with data on the extent of the infection in the population and in key subgroups in order to understand potential immunity and to plan for immunization programs once a vaccine is available.

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- Une des principales responsabilités de l'Agence de la santé publique du Canada consiste à protéger la population canadienne des maladies infectieuses. Afin d'y arriver, elle œuvre à prévenir, à détecter et à évaluer les épidémies et les nouvelles menaces et à intervenir face à celles-ci; elle participe aussi à prévenir la propagation de maladies infectieuses au sein de la population du pays et dans un contexte mondial plus large, à lutter contre cette propagation et à la freiner, le cas échéant.
 - L'établissement au Canada du Groupe de travail sur l'immunité face à la COVID-19 permettra une mise en relation des experts et une exploitation de l'expertise grâce auxquelles on pourra exécuter un programme coordonné, s'appuyant sur la surveillance sérologique (le dépistage de la présence d'anticorps dans le sang), qui servira à mesurer l'ampleur de l'épidémie et à transmettre les résultats obtenus aux décideurs.

- **Alors que la première vague épidémique de COVID-19 semble sur le point de refluer au Canada, notre compréhension du degré d'immunité à la maladie au sein de l'ensemble de la population et des sous-populations vulnérables est grandement lacunaire.**
- **Le 23 avril 2020, le premier ministre a annoncé la mise sur pied du Groupe de travail sur l'immunité face à la COVID-19, qui a pour mission de remédier à l'insuffisance des connaissances et d'appuyer les gouvernements dans la préparation en vue de la prudente relance de l'économie au cours des prochains mois.**
- **Le groupe de travail fournira aux gouvernements et à la population canadienne des données sur l'ampleur de l'infection au sein de la population et des sous-groupes importants afin que l'on connaisse l'immunité potentielle au pays et que l'on puisse planifier des programmes d'immunisation, dès lors qu'un vaccin sera disponible.**

KEY FACTS

- Serology testing of large numbers of people will provide the data needed to understand the scale of infection and will also provide the patient samples needed for supplemental research studies in, for example, virology, immunology, and genomic applications. Given the significant impacts on Canadian's health, social and economic status, there is an enormous time pressure to gather and test these samples as soon as possible and to prioritise and concurrently support associated supplemental research.
- Data will be shared across Canada and internationally to increase the scope and power of the scientific field and to inform Canadian and global public health science and policy, and healthcare.

BACKGROUND

- An investment of \$300 million (Gs&Cs) over 2 years (\$200 million in 2020-21; \$100 million in 2021-22) is required for this initiative to:
 - Establish a coordinating office at McGill University that will provide leadership, establish processes and protocols, identify and coordinate research studies across the country to implement sero-surveillance activities according to standardized approaches;
 - Manage Grants and Contribution Agreements with research teams identified by the Secretariat and Leadership Group;

- Procure testing supply according to design and sampling frame to test population subgroups;
 - Establish bio-banking where required for storage of blood samples so they can be accessed to answer new questions as understanding of the immunology of the virus advances;
 - Measure immunity in the population and correlates of immunity;
 - Coordinate collection and analysis of data for reporting in real-time to inform public health measures;
 - To establish and support the activities of the Canadian COVID-19 Immunity Task Force (CITF). The mandate of the CITF is to conduct a series of serological studies that will determine the extent of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the Canadian population and in specific high risk subgroups in order to better understand potential immunity; and
 - Deliver a clear and comprehensive Pan-Canadian sero-surveillance strategy that aligns researchers across Canada with the aim of generating best evidence on these (and other) questions as quickly as possible to inform better management of the epidemic in the near and medium term.
- The CITF Secretariat, led by McGill University, will work with an established Leadership Group representing scientific expertise and stakeholders from across Canada, to provide direction, oversight, management and coordination of national serological surveillance and supplemental research studies.
 - The CITF Secretariat will leverage the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's recent *COVID-19 Rapid Research Funding Opportunity* to identify potential early research projects that are aligned with the CITF's objectives and mandate.
 - Health Canada also plays an important role as the regulatory approving agency for the serology tests that will be used in Canada.
 - The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) will facilitate the development of Grants and Contribution Agreements with the research teams who have been identified by the CITF Secretariat and Leadership Group to contribute to the CITF's objectives and mandate.
 - The PHAC's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) will be a key collaborator for the CITF activities in providing laboratory services for test validation, serological assays, and scientific expertise in serology and virology, as well as procurement of antibody serological tests for CITF research as needed.
 - The Government of Canada has directed the Minister to provide regular updates to the Cabinet COVID Committee and to the Prime Minister's Office, and that funding be held in a special purpose allotment and not reallocated to other initiatives.

Financial Details

(In dollars)	2020-21 Supps (A)	2021-22 ARLU	2022-23 ARLU	2023-24 ARLU	2024-25 and ongoing
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Statutory		200,000,000	100,000,000	0	0	0
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Anticipated Results

- Serology testing of large numbers of people will provide the data needed to understand the scale of infection and will also provide the patient samples needed for supplemental research studies in, for example, virology, immunology, and genomic applications.

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