

About us

Our mandate

Organizational structure

President's office

Governing Council

Science Council

Executive Management Committee

Institutes

Publications

Events

Careers

Site map

Message from the President – Summer Update

June 25, 2019

Dear colleagues,

As the warm weather approaches, I wanted to wish all of you a relaxing and enjoyable summer, as well as safe journeys to those of you who are travelling.

There is a tremendous amount happening at CIHR and, as we enter this quieter period of the year, I also wanted to take this opportunity update you on a number of items.

First and foremost, we have an election coming. While it might seem odd to mention this as the first item, there are two immediate implications. The first is that, during the election period, the Government of Canada is guided by the [Caretaker Convention](#), which calls for a period of quiescence on the public front. As such, CIHR's public engagements – and my ongoing travels across the country – will be limited during this period. The second implication relates to our current efforts to shape the CIHR of tomorrow. This will involve a delicate balance between being "on the road" and "in the shop." Given the breadth of the task and the clear messages over the last few years, I have opted for the latter until we have a clearly articulated set of next steps for the organization.

Second, I wanted to inform you that the terms of the governance of CIHR are currently being reviewed and rewritten, and will be phased-in beginning this fall. Many of you are familiar with the *CIHR Act* and the overarching principles and values that are contained within it. It lays out clearly the role and value of Governing Council in ensuring that CIHR meets the mandate of the Act. A robust governance structure that reflects best practices is fundamental to the success of any organization and, upon completion of this process, it is our intent and expectation that CIHR will have an exemplary governance structure, capable of holding the organization (and myself in particular) accountable for meeting our mandate.

Embedded within this is the accountability of Governing Council to deliver a strategic plan for CIHR. While a tremendous amount of preliminary work has already gone into the process of developing this new strategic plan, the core of the work is now in full flight. We are currently in the early days of a broad-based consultative process – a concerted effort to engage deeply and widely across our country to develop a framework for health research in Canada that will be generational in nature. Our mandate is to improve the health of Canadians through research and we are the only federal agency with this mandate. As such, I am encouraging all of us to be bold in our thinking and to move beyond simply debating funding. I want us to debate the future of health research in this country and I want us to clearly define the role of CIHR in attaining this vision of the future. I want us to do this collectively, and as a part of a larger health research ecosystem in which all partners see themselves. Finally, I want us to debate how we can achieve this and whether we are configured appropriately to attain such a bold vision.

The process underlying our strategic planning is robust. We are collecting data and opinions now – and I encourage you to share your opinions by completing our [online survey](#). We are also looking carefully at best practices around the world. We will convene workshops in September to begin the difficult process of finding common threads that will become the foundations of the plan. We will work closely with Governing Council to ensure that the plan is robust, and we will once again engage with the research community in December for a Health Research Summit to review the state of the strategic plan and begin to clarify the deliverables for both the short and the long term. Following further review by Governing Council and discussion with the broader community, we will finalize the strategic plan by the summer of 2020 – in time for CIHR's 20th anniversary celebrations.

As part of these broader strategic planning efforts, we are carefully examining the performance of many of our programs, both current and past, in order to ensure that we advance new programs that are well conceived and capable of achieving their objectives. Returning to the *CIHR Act*, we find capacity development among the key deliverables of our mandate. In Canada and around the world, we are beginning to see the costs of not focusing on this critical component. For those of you who know me, it should come as no surprise that I am making it a priority to ensure that the next generation of health researchers is drawn from a wide breadth of excellent programs across this country – and that these programs lead to stable career paths. While this is not the sole purview of CIHR, it is CIHR that must lead this discussion and, over the next several months, you will be asked to participate in a number of these discussions as we return to this core element.

Of course, this does not mean that we are ignoring knowledge creation and knowledge translation, the other two core elements of the *CIHR Act*. In this regard, I am pleased to note that the delivery of our research programs has been stabilized and, for this, I am immensely grateful to all of you, to the College of Reviewers, to the staff at CIHR, and to interim President Rod McInnes for achieving this. We will continue along this pathway as we carefully examine the nature of our program delivery through the strategic planning process. However, you can rest assured that face-to-face peer review will remain at the core of our adjudication process.

Finally, as I approach my first year anniversary as the President of CIHR, I wanted to express my gratitude for the tremendous support that I have received from virtually all quarters as I undertake this journey with you to define the future of CIHR. It has been a sharp learning curve but a richly rewarding one. Thank you for this.

With best wishes,

Michael Strong, MD, FRCP, FCAHS, FAAN
President, CIHR

Date modified: 2019-06-25