



Council of Canadian Academies  
Conseil des académies canadiennes



Canadian Academy of Health Sciences  
Académie canadienne des sciences de la santé

RSC  
The Royal Society of Canada  
The Academies of Arts,  
Humanities and Sciences  
of Canada



SRC  
La Société royale du Canada  
Les Académies des arts,  
des lettres et des sciences  
du Canada

THE CANADIAN ACADEMY  
OF ENGINEERING



Leadership in Engineering Advice  
for Canada

L'ACADÉMIE CANADIENNE  
DU GÉNIE

Chef de file en matière d'expertise-conseil  
en génie pour le Canada

## A Statement of Common Understanding

### *Among the Council of Canadian Academies, the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Academy of Engineering & the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences*

In 2011 the presidents of the Council of Canadian Academies, the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Academy of Engineering and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences worked cooperatively to develop a joint *Statement of Common Understanding* to guide their future collaboration. The goal of the agreement is to bring together intellectual resources in synergistic ways to generate capacity for credible, evidence-based, and independent scientific advice in support of the development of sound public policy in Canada.

The development of a strong collaborative partnership among the four organizations will:

- Promote trust and understanding of collective and individual organizational goals;
- Help leverage each organization's strengths and identify complementarities in expertise, capabilities, knowledge and talent;
- Create synergistic use of resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner (whether it is funding, expert volunteers or operational capacity); and
- Provide opportunity for innovative thinking in the provision of expert scientific advice.

All parties recognize that success will require strong mutual reliance among the four organizations and a long-term commitment.

### About the Council and Academies

*The Council of Canadian Academies (the Council)* The Council of Canadian Academies is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that began operation in 2005. The Council supports evidence-based, expert assessments to inform public policy development in Canada. Assessments are conducted by independent, multidisciplinary panels of experts from across Canada and abroad. The Council's blue-ribbon panels serve free of charge and many are Fellows of the Council's Member Academies. The Council defines science broadly to include the natural, social and health sciences, engineering and the humanities. The Council's vision is to be Canada's trusted voice for science in the public interest.

*The Royal Society of Canada (RSC)* is the senior national body of distinguished Canadian scholars, artists and scientists. The primary objective of the RSC is to promote learning and research in the arts and sciences. The RSC consists of nearly 2,000 Fellows – men and women who are selected by their peers for outstanding contributions to the natural and social sciences, the arts and the humanities. The RSC exists to recognize academic excellence, advise governments and organizations, and promote Canadian culture.

*The Canadian Academy of Engineering (CAE)* is the national institution through which Canada's most distinguished and experienced engineers provide strategic advice on matters of critical importance to Canada. The Academy is an independent, self-governing, and non-profit organization established in 1987. Members of the Academy are nominated and elected by their peers to honorary fellowships, in recognition of their distinguished achievements and career-long service to the engineering profession. Fellows of the academy are committed to ensuring that Canada's engineering expertise is applied to the benefit of all Canadians.

*The Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS)* recognizes individuals of great achievement in the academic health sciences in Canada. Founded in 2004, the CAHS has approximately 400 Fellows and appoints new Fellows on an annual basis. The organization is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors and a Board Executive. The main function of CAHS is to provide timely, informed, and unbiased assessments of urgent issues affecting the health of Canadians. The Academy also monitors global health-related events to enhance Canada's state of readiness for the future, and provides a Canadian voice for health sciences internationally. CAHS provides a collective, authoritative, multi-disciplinary voice on behalf of the health sciences community.

## **The Collaboration**

The Council and the Academies recognize the need to strengthen their collaboration in order to provide a more robust and cohesive platform for evidence-based science advice in the interest of Canadians. The report of the 2010 External Evaluation Panel of the Council of Canadian Academies stated the following:

*"Canada's (...) science advice community must speak with a coherent voice (...) If the assets of the Council and its three Member Academies are brought together (...) to create a shared and collective vision, the result will be a powerful voice."*

A productive and mutually beneficial relationship can be built on the following common interests:

- A strong belief in the importance of science to public life.
- A voice for science in the development of public policy.
- The value of scientific assessments deploying interdisciplinary scholarship and analysis of evidence.
- A desire to contribute to and inform public debate.
- A strong and collaborative Canadian voice for science, engineering and technology on the international stage.

- Demonstration of the fullest return on the government's investment in science and evidence-based assessments.

## Principles for Collaboration

The Council and Academies agree that collaboration must embrace and build on four key principles:

### 1) *RESPECT*

Collaboration requires the recognition of the intrinsic value and distinct character of the four organizations.

### 2) *EQUALITY*

As equal partners in this relationship, it is recognized that the four organizations bring valued and distinct assets to the partnership. They differ in terms of experience, number of members, level of organizational maturity, resources and capacity. The Council is not an Academy; it has a distinct and specific mandate to generate evidence-based assessments to inform public policy and dialogue.

### 3) *RECIPROCITY, RECOGNITION AND PARTICIPATION*

At the heart of a successful collaboration is the recognition of mutual benefit that enriches each partner, especially in terms of public profile and reputation. In working together, reciprocity, recognition and participation will be achieved through shared intellectual leadership and expertise and a willingness to acknowledge and share credit for contributions.

### 4) *TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION*

Transparency is built on trust and mutual respect. It represents an open and honest expression of aspirations and expectations. Through both formal and informal protocols, communication must be continuous, regular and proactive.

## Realizing Potential

To realize the potential of this collaboration the four organizations envisage an operational focus in which all parties bring relevance and value. Specific attention will be given to the following forms of collaboration:

- *Scientific Advisory Committee Membership* – Development of a collaborative process for solicitation of potential members for membership on the Council's Scientific Advisory Committee.
- *Question Solicitation* – Development of a project portfolio of assessment questions of significance.
- *Assessment Panel Composition* – Development of a collaborative process to request potential panel member candidates for Council assessments.
- *Assessment Projects* – Development of a coordinated capacity to undertake and develop a brand for joint projects, building on the rigorous and disciplined Council process for conducting assessments.

- **Communication** – Making a commitment to ensure advance notice of activities of common interest.
- **Recognition** – Making a commitment to recognize one another's organizations and members in our respective communications; to promote and acknowledge, as appropriate, Council panel members in our communications and to invite one another to participate in respective annual general meetings as appropriate.
- **Conflict Resolution** – Recognizing this Statement of Common Understanding as an expression of the goodwill of each of the signing parties and the desire to cooperate and collaborate in the areas and activities described above, the presidents of the four organizations will manage potential conflicts through regular and open communication.
- **Review** – Providing for review and evolution of this agreement each year at the Council's Annual General Meeting.



President, Royal  
Society of Canada



President, Canadian  
Academy of Engineering



President, Canadian  
Academy of Health  
Sciences



President, Council of  
Canadian Academies

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