

IDEAS TO ACTION 2025



Summary Report





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AT A GLANCE

A HUGE SUCCESS

We welcomed a packed room of nearly 300 leaders, government representatives, academics, and industry voices for a full day of dialogue and policy exchange. The day opened with remarks from Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, who highlighted Ontario's strides in health and life sciences and the opportunities ahead.

Throughout the forum, thought leaders tackled critical conversations—from the attack on science and the shifting political climate, to the future of stem cell research and regenerative medicine, and the importance of cross-border collaboration.

The event concluded with a lively networking reception, offering attendees the chance to connect and continue the discussions.



**Timothy Caulfield**

Professor, Faculty of Law and the School of Public Health, and Research Director, Health Law Institute at the University of Alberta

ATTACK ON SCIENCE

A thought-provoking keynote examining the growing challenges facing scientific research and communication, and the political and social forces eroding trust in evidence. The session emphasized optimism and individual responsibility in defending science and rebuilding public confidence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Health misinformation is contributing to preventable illness and death and is now shaping views on adjacent science-driven files (e.g., climate, energy, biotechnology). The scale and severity means governments and institutions should treat misinformation as a core systemic risk affecting population health, innovation, adoption and public trust not as an external “messaging” challenge.

Social media ecosystems reward emotionally resonant, extreme content, and most users share content without verifying it (often without clicking through). This creates a policy imperative to complement education with platform-facing interventions such as transparency requirements, friction/accuracy nudges, and high-stakes content demotion approaches, especially for health and science topics with real-world harm.

A “whole-of-society” approach is required: build resilience, communicate consensus, and protect scientific voices. Specifically: a) Invest early in critical thinking/media literacy, b) Scale prebunking, debunking, and accuracy nudges, c) communicate scientific consensus clearly and repeatedly (and explain how consensus is formed), d) Ensure institutions support and protect experts who speak publicly, and e) Incentivize and reward public-facing science communication as core professional work.

Moderator



Garrett Tone
Executive Director,
Life Sciences,
Invest Ontario



Alison Symington
Principal,
Life Science
Strategic Consulting



Parimal Nathwani
President & CEO,
Toronto Innovation
Acceleration Partners
(TIAP)



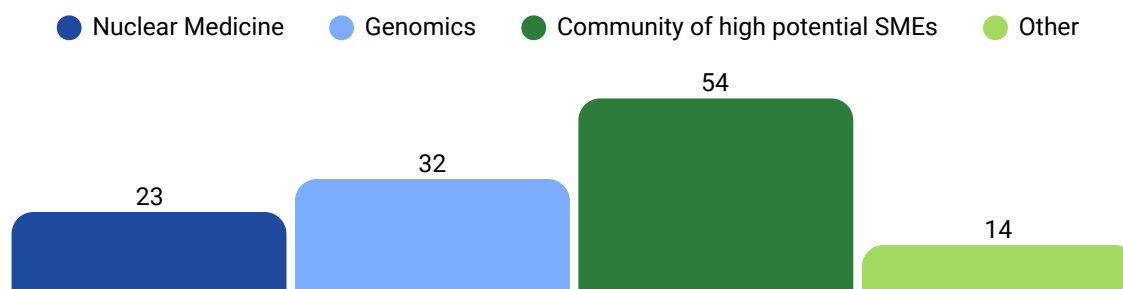
Patrick Veit-Haibach
MD, FRCPC,
Deputy Radiologist-in-Chief,
Joint Department Medical
Imaging

COMPETING VISIONS FOR CANADA'S LIFE SCIENCES

A dynamic debate exploring what it will take for Ontario to build a globally competitive life sciences ecosystem. Panelists brought diverse perspectives from research, commercialization, and health system innovation to discuss strengths, gaps, and strategic priorities. The session also featured interactive polling conducted before and after the discussion (see polling results below), offering real-time insights into participants' view and illustrating how perspectives shifted over the course of the session in response to the insights put forward by the panelists.

PRE-PANEL SURVEY

What area of ontario's life sciences ecosystem are you most excited for?



COMPETING VISIONS FOR CANADA'S LIFE SCIENCES

KEY TAKEAWAYS

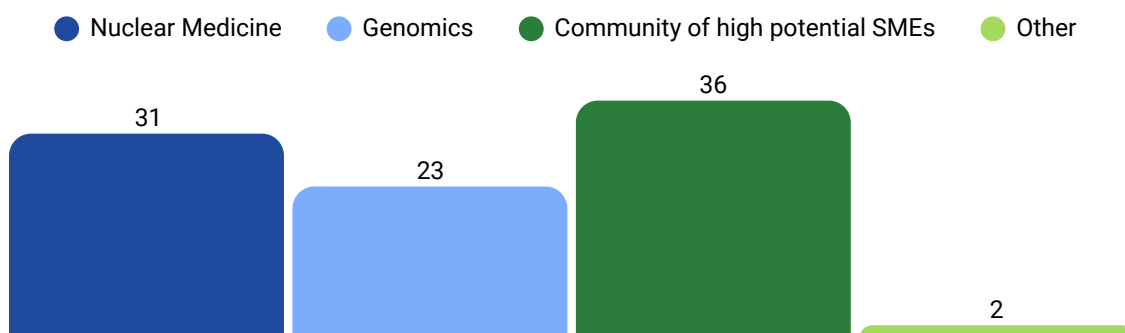
Genomics was positioned as foundational infrastructure underpinning advances in health, agri-food, clean tech, and environmental sciences, with strong evidence of macroeconomic and productivity returns. Treat genomics as critical research infrastructure, not a niche program, with long-term funding, shared health/genomics data systems, and co-designed, end-user-driven projects.

High-potential SMEs are the primary engines of IP translation, talent retention, and cluster development. Close the \$2-\$10m "missing middle" financing gap and provide modular lab space and talent programs so Ontario-origin firms can translate science into scalable, globally competitive companies.

Nuclear medicine and theranostics leverage Ontario's reactors and isotope production capacity as globally unique assets. Align health, industrial, and nuclear policy to build a full domestic value chain from isotope production to radiopharmaceuticals, supported by streamlined regulation, health system readiness, and integration with nuclear and industrial strategy.

POST-PANEL SURVEY

What area of ontario's life sciences ecosystem are you most excited for?



Moderator



Anne Mullin
Principal,
Shift Health



Matt Cahill
CFO,
Nomic Bio

IN THE TRENCHES: BUILDING A LIFE SCIENCES COMPANY

This session explored how Ontario can better support the growth of life sciences ventures, focusing on closing the mid-stage capital gap, leveraging international investment networks, and strengthening the local talent and commercialization ecosystem.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Clear policy objectives are essential for effective commercialization and ecosystem development; alignment on whether to prioritize job creation, tax revenue, or wealth generation will shape appropriate support mechanism and investments.

Design incentives and programs that bring foreign VCs into Canadian syndicates, expanding access to larger pools of capital, stronger networks, and experienced life sciences talent.

Focus government support on companies that have already secured arm's length equity, using matching or sidecar funds to leverage investor diligence rather than trying to pick winners upfront.

Continue simplifying and enhancing pathways for skilled life sciences and commercialization talent to work in Canada, addressing the local shortage of experienced venture creators and scale-up leaders.

**Jovan Matic**

Director,
Health Innovation
Policy Branch,
Ministry of Health

**Jillian Paul**

Director, Research,
Analysis & Evaluation
Branch, Ministry of
Health

**Arshia Raafat**

Director, Health
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**Andrew Guy**

Director, Advanced
Technologies Branch,
Ministry of Economic
Development, Job Creation
and Trade

**Ian Le**

Director, Program
Management and
Delivery, Supply Ontario

ONTARIO'S HEALTH INNOVATION PATHWAY

A cross-government panel outlining Ontario's new Health Innovation Pathway (HIP) and its role in accelerating the adoption of innovative technologies. Speakers discussed how streamlined evaluation, coordinated support and a focus on made-in-Ontario solutions can improve patient care and drive economic growth.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The HIP standardizes and streamlines innovation adoption in Ontario, moving away from fragmented processes toward a single access point with coordinated guidance ("concierge" function) for innovators.

Predictability and transparency are prioritized to reduce uncertainty for companies, including clear status updates, process timelines, and supporting more strategic planning and capital allocation by innovators.

The pathway acts as a policy tool for both strengthening the local innovation ecosystem and economic resilience, while maintaining open, fair global competition; targeted supports for Ontario and Canadian companies are combined with ongoing review to ensure system benefits and domestic capacity growth.

Moderator

**Christine Elliott**

Partner, Fasken,
Former Minister of
Health, Ontario

**Elaine Grand**

VP Market Access &
Strategic Customers,
Johnson & Johnson
Innovation Medicine

**Connie Cote**

CEO, Health
Charities Coalition
of Canada

**Gus Grant**

Registrar & CEO,
College of Physicians
and Surgeons of Nova
Scotia

**Paul Woods**

MD, President & CEO,
Southlake Health

HEALTH SYSTEM READINESS & TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

A forward-looking discussion on whether Canada's health system is prepared for the next wave of innovation. Panelists addressed challenges related to data infrastructure, interoperability, funding models, and incentives for adopting emerging technologies and therapies.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Shift to outcomes-based, population-focused funding models that align incentives across hospitals, physicians, and other providers, instead of relying mainly on fee-for-service and narrow program budgets.

Create earlier, structured collaboration mechanisms between government, industry, regulators, providers, and patient organizations to plan for upcoming innovations years in advance and coordinated implementation.

Invest in interoperable data infrastructure and clear data-governance frameworks so clinical, administrative, and patient-generated data can be used safely and effectively for AI, analytics, and system planning.

Embed patient and caregiver voices in governance and decision-making for research, technology assessment, reimbursement, and life sciences strategies, ensuring patient outcomes drive priorities.

Use AI and digital tools first to improve efficiency and capacity (e.g. back-office tasks, virtual care support, risk stratification, documentation), while policy, infrastructure, and safeguards mature for more advanced clinical applications.



Cate Murray
President & CEO,
Stem Cell Network

CELL AND GENE THERAPIES: THE FUTURE IS HERE – IS CANADA READY?

This TED-style talk explored how regenerative medicine is redefining treatment for conditions like blindness, cancer, heart failure, muscular dystrophy, and diabetes and why Canada risks losing the benefits of its own breakthroughs. Blending compelling patient-focused examples with a stark diagnosis of system fragmentation, brain drain, and weak commercialization pathways, she made a forceful case for a coordinated, Canada-first strategy that treats health innovation as national infrastructure, keeps talent and IP at home, and ensures Canadian patients are among the first-not the last- to benefit from Canada's science.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Treat research as a strategic national investment, with sustained support for basic science, translational work, and early-stage clinical trials.

Streamline approvals, improve data integration and sharing across provinces, and build world-leading centres of excellence that host trials, concentrate expertise, and act as receptors for biotech investment.

Use pension funds, venture capital, public-private partnerships, milestone-based reimbursement, and Canadian-first procurement/formulary policies to fund domestic scale-up, retain IP, and prioritize Canadian-developed therapies for Canadian patients.

Establish a Canadian not-for-profit one-stop shop to guide innovators through regulation, clinical trials, manufacturing, investment and business development.



Suzanne McGurn
President & CEO,
Canada Drug Agency

HOW FISCAL TURMOIL CAN OPEN THE DOOR – FOR REAL INNOVATION & COLLABORATION

In this TED-style talk, Suzanne McGurn used a metaphorical journey to Emerald City from The Wizard of Oz to encourage new ways of thinking about Canada's health system. Against a backdrop of U.S. policy shifts and increasing system pressures, the session highlighted why innovative thinking and cross-sector collaboration are essential. Drawing on lessons from leading Canada's Drug Agency since 2020, the talk illustrated how meaningful innovation succeeds when partners work together to navigate complexity and drive change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Define a small set of system-wide objectives (e.g., faster equitable access to high-impact therapies within sustainable budgets) and make all major policy, funding, and evaluation decisions accountable to those goals.

Use time-limited reimbursement, conditional listings, and real-world evidence agreements to provide earlier access to promising therapies while managing uncertainty and financial risk.

Build interoperable systems and common data standards that allow tracking of clinical outcomes, utilization, and costs across provinces, enabling better value assessment and continuous policy adjustment.

Embed expectations for joint outcomes into funding formulas, performance frameworks, and organizational mandates so that ministries, agencies, and industry are rewarded for shared success rather than siloed wins.

Moderator



Bill Dempster
President,
3Sixty Public Affairs



Kim Wright
Principal & Founder,
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Sarah Letersky
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Jason Lietaer
President,
Enterprise Canada



Stevie O'Brien
Principal,
Barrack Hill Public
Affairs Inc

POLITICAL PUNDITS: INSIDE THE POLICY MACHINE

This panel brought together political strategists to examine how Canada's current "poly crisis", fiscal pressures, and shifting federal-provincial dynamics are reshaping health and life sciences policy. Speakers highlighted the rise of a more disciplined, ROI-driven federal approach, growing emphasis on domestic capacity and accelerated access, and what this means for how the sector should engage governments now.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Build unified coalitions across industry, patient groups, providers, and academia to present a small set of shared policy asks to government.

Frame every proposal in terms of governments' core priorities: Canada-US resilience, domestic capacity, productivity, and fiscal sustainability, backed by clear ROI and 12-24-month deliverables.

Design initiatives as time-bound pilot projects with defined metrics and evaluation criteria that, if successful, can be scaled into permanent programs or broader policy changes.



Christopher Alexander
Commercial Officer,
Department of Commerce
U.S. Consulate (Toronto)

PROVIDING INDUSTRY FEEDBACK TO DECISION- MAKERS

This TED-style talk outlines how Canadian life sciences and medtech companies can work with industry associations, and government partners on both sides of the border to navigate shifting policies.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engage industry associations not only to advance member interests, but also to understand government objectives (e.g., Ontario procurement goals) and collaboratively develop practical policy options, including feasible alternatives or targeted exemptions where warranted.

When policies or regulatory changes are proposed or implemented (e.g., adjustments to procurement thresholds), provide officials- through industry association- with timely, evidenced-based submissions, including concrete data and case studies demonstrating impacts on patient access, pricing, and investment decisions, to support calibration and refinement of the approach.

HOW OUR ATTENDEES FELT ABOUT THE IDEAS TO ACTION 2025 FORUM

plan
passion
reflective innovation
enlightened dynamic aligned
informed energized
networking pride opportunity
strategy new
educational inspirational
hopeful fulfilling collaboration
driven optimistic motivated
thought-provoking
investment connected
canada inspired research
engaging
meaningful inspiring

THANK YOU

TO OUR ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Gillian Kennedy (Co-Chair)
Rupinder Bagha (Co-Chair)
Matthew Bureau (Co-Chair)
Nancy Abbey
Kerry Allerton
Sousan Bagherpoor
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Diana Chan
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Kristina Gentes
Jeffrey Graham
Sasha Lisovsky
Sean McBride
Bethany Moir
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Grant Perry
Andrew Retfalvi
Benjamin Rovinski
Mark Smithyes
Joanna Valsamis
Alex Wellstead

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our organizing committee whose support has been instrumental in making the Life Sciences Forum a success. Their commitment to advancing life sciences innovation drives meaningful change, and we appreciate their generous contributions that enable collaboration and development across the sector.

THANK YOU

TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS

PRESENTING



PREMIUM



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Innovative Medicine



NETWORKING RECEPTION



PROGRAM



REFRESHMENT BREAK



THANK YOU

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PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Life Sciences Ontario is grateful for the continued support from our generous sponsors. Their commitment to advancing life sciences in Ontario empowers us to achieve our mission. These partners play a crucial role in enhancing our programs and initiatives, fostering innovation, and driving policy changes that benefit the entire sector.

Together with our sponsors, we strive to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing within the life sciences community. Their invaluable contributions help us create opportunities for dialogue and engagement, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of advancements in health and science. Thank you for your unwavering support and partnership.



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