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Welcome! Introduction to CAPS/ACPP

The Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars
L’Association Canadienne des Postdoctorantes et Postdoctorants

Who are CAPS/ACPP?
We are a non-profit, volunteer-led professional association made up of current postdocs. We represent all Canadian postdoctoral researchers including those in Canada and abroad.

Our Mandate
CAPS/ACPP works to improve the lives, training, and work experience of all Canadian postdocs. Our vision is to create a strong community in which all Canadian postdocs are provided fair compensation, benefits, rights, privileges, and protections, as well as a supportive social network and effective support and career development opportunities.

Executive Council

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Padmapriya (Priya) Muralidharan, Ph.D.

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VC Membership
Dr. Raghu Sundaresan Nagalingam, Ph.D.

VC Website
Catherine Hume, Ph.D.

VC Surveys and Data
Rahma Chouchane, Ph.D.

VC Français
Marine Hemmerle, Ph.D.

VC (English)
Communications
Rima Siauciunaite, Ph.D.

Please e-mail chair@capsacpp.ca to express your interest.

Recruitment for the 2024 Executive Council will open in Nov this year

Join CAPS/ACPP
We are currently recruiting for the following open positions.
- Vice Chair Communications
- Vice Chair International
- Vice Chair Career Development

2023
What is PAW?
PAW is an annual global celebration to recognise the hard work and significant contributions that postdocs make to research, innovation and teaching. CAPS/ACPP is hosting a range of free events for postdocs, we hope you join us for the celebrations!

REGISTER FOR THESE PAW EVENTS THROUGH OUR WEBSITE HERE!
PAW 2023
Postdoc Appreciation Week

MEET OUR SPEAKERS FOR THE PAW 2023 WEBINAR SERIES

Dr. Dawn Henwood - Knowledge Translational Coach, Clarity Connect
She has a PhD in English literature from the University of Toronto and more than two decades of industry experience working as a learning designer and communications consultant across various sectors, including IT, engineering, and healthcare.
She explains you how to leverage the skills you've developed as a scholar to communicate differently. You'll learn how to engage, educate, and inspire the people you want to impact.

Dr. Lisa Romkey - Associate Professor and Associate Director, ISTEP, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, University of Toronto
Lisa Romkey serves as Associate Professor, Teaching Stream with the Division of Engineering Science at the University of Toronto. In this position, Lisa plays a central role in the evaluation, design and delivery of a dynamic and complex curriculum, while facilitating the development and implementation of various teaching learning and assessment initiatives. She teaches undergraduate courses in engineering & society, and graduate courses in engineering education.

Charlotte Anyango Ong’ang’a, Ph.D. - Career Development Specialist
She is the author of "Educated Internationally, Hired Locally". As an accomplished educator with over 15 years of experience. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics. With her linguistic expertise, she offers invaluable guidance on Resume Writing, Networking, Job Search Strategies, and Workplace Communication, helping her clients to succeed in their career aspirations. She is actively involved in facilitating Career Development workshops and providing career support to Ph.D. students at the university.

Jim Arkell - Attorney
Jim Arkell has a vast array of legal experience, including nine years as a trial lawyer, and 16 years in academia as a University Professor. He currently exclusively practices immigration law focusing primarily on National Interest Waiver, Extraordinary Ability and Outstanding Professor Researcher matters for clients from top Universities and Research Institutions from around the country.
Advocacy

What are we doing for postdocs?

CAPS/ACPP advocates for postdocs in many ways:

Collect data on postdoc concerns

Meeting with Postdoc Associations (PDA’s)
The CAPS/ACPP ‘Advocacy’ working group regularly meets with different PDA’s from across the country to acquire first hand insight into postdoc needs and immediate concerns. Are you part of a PDA and want to be involved in this conversation? Please reach out to us at communications@capsacpp.ca chair@capsacpp.ca

Surveys
The CAPS/ACPP ‘Surveys and Data’ working group runs surveys to assess specific postdoc issues, like immigration, as well as running the quadrennial National Postdoc Survey to assess the current postdoc landscape and identify potential issues. See our past survey reports here! The next National Postdoc Survey will be launched next year - your participation will be appreciated!

Communicate postdoc concerns

Meeting with Tri-Council Representatives
The CAPS/ACPP ‘Advocacy’ working group regularly meets with representatives from CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC to inform them of postdoc concerns and discuss how Tri-Council agencies can better support postdocs.

Communicating with Government Officials
CAPS/ACPP met with Hon. MP Chrystia Freeland, the Minister of Finance of Canada, to advocate for postdocs and the future of Canadian research. We hand delivered a letter urging the need for increases in research salaries. Read the full letter here! And at the end of this issue.

Speaking in the House of Commons
CAPS/ACPP Chair, Dr Padmapriya Muralidharan, spoke on behalf of postdocs on the Standing Committee on Science and Research in June this year. CAPS/ACPP put forward a 6 page brief explaining who is a postdoc, what do they do, how is their research supported, what are the major concerns with the current funding system, research and innovation sector in Canada compared to other countries, how does postdoc funding look across the globe, how does the low pay impact their quality of life and the brain drain. Watch the meeting here!

Excerpt from CAPS/ACPP Letter to Minister Chrystia Freeland:
“In 2003, the value of a Tri-Agency funded postdoctoral fellowship was $40K/year. Today, in 2023, this value remains relatively unchanged, and, at just $45K before taxes, it is insufficient to meet today’s cost of living. Since 2003 the cost of goods and services has risen 53%. We ask that the value of Tri-Agency Funded postdoctoral fellowships also increase by 53% to $61K; and index to inflation moving forward. In some Canadian cities, the minimum postdoc salaries are well below the living wage (~$7K in Toronto). Despite our education, qualifications, and value to Canadian research, many postdocs do not make enough to afford to rent a one bedroom apartment in the cities where they work. Postdocs, with an average age of 30-34 years, are not paid enough to start or support a family, nor save for their future.”
Advocacy Partnerships

Increase federal funding for postdocs

Add your voice!

Low pay is the biggest challenge facing Canadian postdocs today. CAPS/ACPP is proud to partner with Support Out Science (SOS) to advocate for increased funding for graduate students and postdocs. We have been busy, and may be close to meeting our goal to increase pay for Canadian postdocs. **We need you in September 2023** to help us reach the government and advocate for a raise.

**Written pre-budget submission**
August 2023
CAPS/ACPP partnered with SOS to submit a pre-budget consultation to advocate for increased federal support for postdocs in Budget 2024. Read the full submission [here](#).

**Budget Recommendations**
That the government increase the budget for the Tri-Council funding agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC) in order to:
#1: Increase value of scholarships for masters students to $26,840/year.
#2: Increase the value of doctoral scholarships to $35,000/year.
#3: Increase the value of postdoctoral fellowships to $61,348/year.
#4: Index future award values to adjust for inflation.
#5: Increase the number of graduate scholarships by 50%.
#6: Double the number of postdoctoral fellowships awarded annually.
#7: Increase research grant budgets provided to faculty by at least 10% per year for the next five years to allow for increased graduate student and postdoctoral pay.

**Nationwide Walkout**
May 1, 2023
Across the country, postdocs joined an estimated 10,000 Canadian Scientists protesting the lack of new investment in funding for grad students, postdocs, and grants in Budget 2023. Orchestrated by SOS, many postdocs and CAPS/ACPP executives rallied to organize and participate in Walkouts within their own institutions and cities. Learn more about CAPS/ACPP participation [here](#).

**Meeting with Minister Freeland**
September 5, 2023 - Toronto, ON
Members of CAPS/ACPP, SOS and CASA met with Hon. MP Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance. This was an amazing opportunity to advocate for graduate students and postdocs. CAPS/ACPP is grateful to the Minister for her time and attention.

CAPS/ACPP Chair, Dr Priya Muralidharan (second from the right)
Announcements

CAPS/ACPP has a new website!
Our new home on the web is: capsacpp.ca
Visit for up to date information on CAPS/ACPP events, news, and resources.

Add your Postdoc Association to the national postdoc directory
CAPS/ACPP is inviting all Canadian postdoc associations (PDAs) to reach out. Our advocacy group would love to connect and discuss immediate concerns for postdocs. Please contact us at communications@capsacpp.ca chair@capsacpp.ca

Join us at our 13th Annual General Meeting
November 16th 2023, Hybrid on Zoom and in person at UBC
Free for all postdocs to attend. Registration details will be posted to the CAPS/ACPP website.

Coming next year: The 2024 National Postdoc Survey
Your participation will be appreciated.

Contribute to the next issue of Postdocs eMagazine
Enquire about submitting content. Email website@capsacpp.ca
Dear Minister Freeland,

We are writing to convey the urgent need for the Government of Canada to provide a multi-year increase in funding to the Tri-Council Funding Agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC) in the next Federal budget. Increases in the budgets of each of these Agencies will be an absolutely critical investment in the future of Canadian research by supporting our graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

We, the Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars/ L’Association Canadienne des Postdoctorantes et Postdoctorants (CAPS/ACPP), are a non-profit, volunteer-run, professional association composed of current postdocs. Our mandate is to improve the lives, training, and work experience of the over 10K Canadian postdocs that we represent. The greatest challenge facing Canadian postdocs today is the lack of adequate financial compensation for our work.

What is a postdoc? Postdocs are highly qualified and skilled professionals who continue to pursue a research career following a doctoral degree. Postdocs are not students. We typically have 10 years of post-secondary education, and two or more degrees. Postdocs who want to stay in academia will likely be postdocs for at least five years. Postdocs conduct research, teach, advise, mentor, and manage research groups and labs. In many ways, Postdocs are the backbone of Canadian research. Yet, across Canada, postdocs are undervalued and underpaid.

In 2003, the value of a Tri-Agency funded postdoctoral fellowship was $40K/year. Today, in 2023, this value remains relatively unchanged, and, at just $45K before taxes, it is insufficient to meet today's cost of living. Since 2003 the cost of goods and services has risen 53%. We ask that the value of Tri-Agency Funded postdoctoral fellowships also increase by 53% to $61K; and index to inflation moving forward. In some Canadian cities, the minimum postdoc salaries are well below the living wage (~$7K in Toronto). Despite our education, qualifications, and value to Canadian research, many postdocs do not make enough to afford to rent a one bedroom apartment in the cities where they work. Postdocs, with an average age of 30-34 years, are not paid enough to start or support a family, nor save for their future.

The values of the Tri-Agency funded fellowships set a national standard by which academic institutions set their minimum salaries. Raising the Tri-Agency fellowship values will push postdoc employers to offer similarly equitable salaries and will even put a stopper in the Canadian brain drain that is harming the current and future potential of Canadian innovation.

Support diversity and inclusion. An academic career path should be accessible to any qualified candidate regardless of their financial status. At current rates of pay, only postdocs with independent sources of wealth, from partners or family, can afford to pursue a Canadian research career. Low postdoc pay is a barrier for equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in science that needs to be addressed by increased Federal investment in postdoctoral fellowship values.

Stop the Canadian brain drain. We are witnessing Canadian postdocs leave their academic career paths, or leave Canada, because they cannot afford to live and work here, let alone save for their future. Our 2020 National Postdoc Survey found that 30% of postdocs leave the country (primarily for the United States and Europe) for better opportunities. If we want the future of Canadian research to be internationally competitive, we have to pay postdocs enough to recruit and retain international talent. Other G7 countries are paying postdocs 2-3X what Canada offers them. The number of Canadian PhD students has doubled in the past 20 years. In order for Canada to capitalize on our considerable training investment in these PhD graduates, we ask for a 100% increase in the number of Tri-agency postdoctoral fellowships by. Increasing both the value and number of postdoctoral fellowships will provide our PhD graduates with opportunities to continue in their fields of research and Canadian innovation.

Strong investment in the Federal research agencies and Postdocs is supported by sequential reports commissioned by the Government of Canada, the Naylor report 2017 and the Bouchard report 2022.

We thank you for your dedicated service to Canadians and for considering this appeal.

Sincerely,

Members of the Executive Council
The Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars
L’Association Canadienne des Postdoctorantes et Postdoctorants (CAPS/ACPP)