



Global Excellence Initiative

2025 annual report



Global
Excellence
Initiative

Initiative pour
l'excellence
mondiale

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
THE GLOBAL EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE	2
GEI IN ACTION: HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025	3
GEI REVIEW SERVICE	5
CELEBRATING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	8
CONCLUSION AND LOOKING AHEAD	10
APPENDIX A: GOVERNANCE	11
APPENDIX B: GEI EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS	13
APPENDIX C: NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS	15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, Canadian researchers earned 25 prestigious international research prizes, including the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, reinforcing Canada's global research reputation at a time of intensifying international competition. Three of these prize recipients used the Global Excellence Initiative's external review service to strengthen their nominations prior to submission, demonstrating the tangible impact of the Global Excellence Initiative (GEI) in supporting competitive international recognition.

GEI had a strong year, marked by sustained demand for its external review service, expanded capacity building opportunities and a well-attended public-facing event highlighting the value and impact of Canadian research. These activities supported researchers and institutions while strengthening awareness of Canadian excellence nationally and internationally.

The success of the initiative is made possible through the support of our partner organizations:



Fondation
Rideau Hall
Foundation

INNOVATION

Canada Foundation
for Innovation Fondation canadienne
pour l'innovation



CIHR IRSC

Canadian Institutes of
Health Research Instituts de recherche
en santé du Canada



National Research
Council Canada

Conseil national de
recherches Canada



**NSERC
CRSNG**



Social Sciences and
Humanities Research
Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches
en sciences humaines
du Canada

Canada



THE GLOBAL EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

Launched in 2012 by the Right Honourable David Johnston, 28th Governor General of Canada, the Global Excellence Initiative has three main objectives, each of which plays a crucial role in enhancing Canada's global research standing:

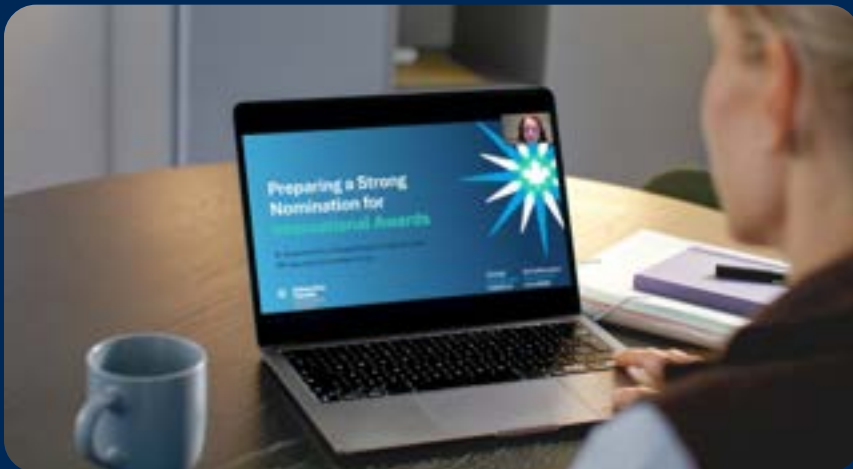
- 1.** Increase the number of international research prizes won by Canadian researchers and promote a culture of excellence.
- 2.** Raise awareness of the contributions of leading Canadian researchers, inspiring young Canadians to pursue academic studies and careers in research, whether in industry, academia or government laboratories.
- 3.** Enhance global recognition of Canadian research excellence, augmenting Canada's visibility as a premier destination for cutting-edge research.

GEI plays a distinctive and strategic role in advancing these objectives by implementing a range of activities designed to elevate Canadian research on the global stage:

- **Advocacy:** Position Canadian researchers for top-tier international awards through GEI canvassing committee.
- **Award nomination support:** Strengthen nomination submissions through expert peer reviews, tailored guidance and the comprehensive award inventory.
- **Capacity building:** Equip institutions with the tools, knowledge and training needed to successfully compete on the global stage.
- **Celebration:** Elevate and showcase Canadian award recipients to demonstrate national research excellence and inspire future research talent.

GEI IN ACTION: HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025

In 2025, the Global Excellence Initiative elevated Canadian research on the global stage, celebrating award-winning researchers, expanding program visibility through strategic events and strengthening support services for universities and research institutions nationwide.



Webinar – Preparing a strong nomination for international awards

- August 27, 2025 – 50 + participants
- Guest speaker Suzanne Fortier equipped research administrators and institutional staff with practical guidance to strengthen nomination practices and pipelines.



Canadian Science and Policy Conference

- November 19 to 21, 2025
- GEI staff promoted initiative services and engaged with researchers, relevant organizations and partners, contributing to increased awareness and program reach.



Universities Canada presents The Walrus Talks: Innovation Nation

- November 26, 2025 – Canadian Museum of Nature + live stream
- 120 in-person attendees and over 300 online participants
- Seven Canadian researchers delivered seven-minute talks highlighting how their work is shaping future innovation and delivering real-world impact.
- Watch the event!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQI5mXFThHg>



Digital outreach and engagement

- Quarterly GEI newsletter and ongoing social media
- Highlighted international award winners through Universities Canada social media channels and the GEI newsletter, reaching more than 300 subscribers (20% increase since 2024)

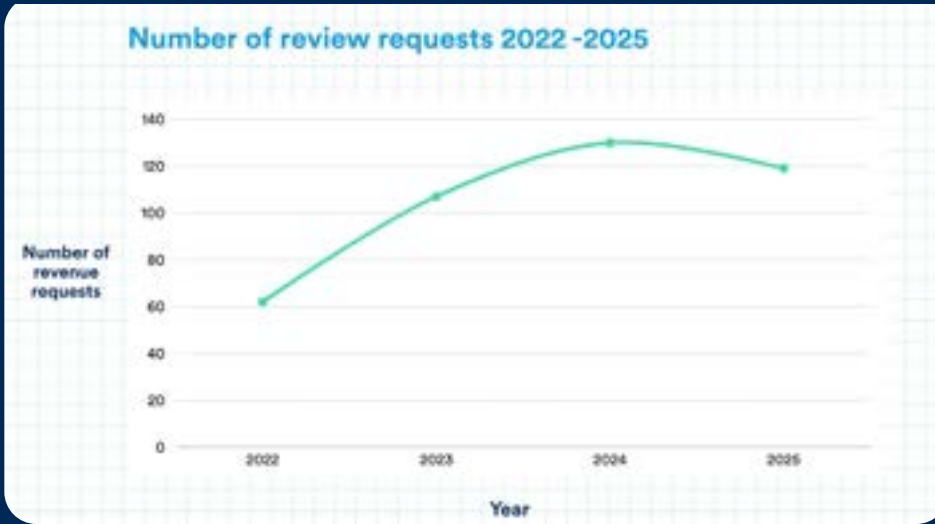


Program Governance

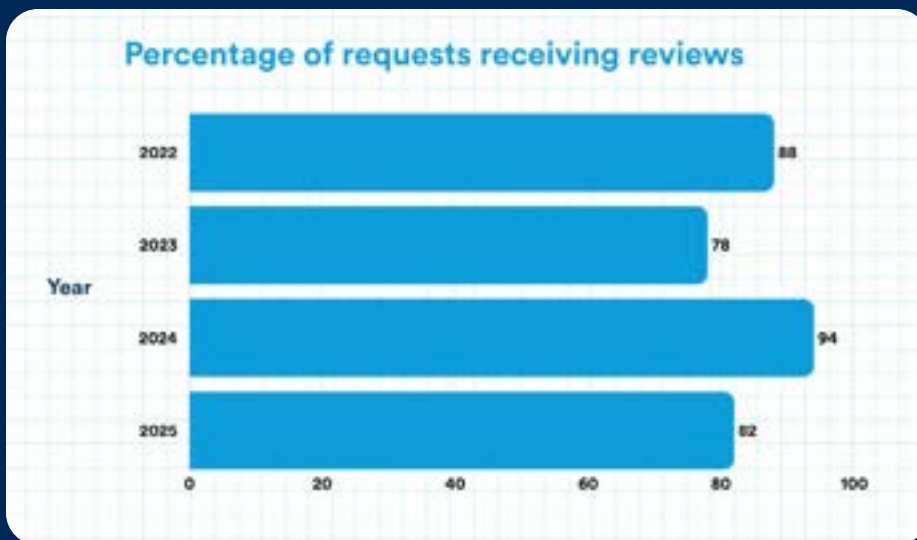
- Held four canvassing committee meetings and two champions group meetings, ensuring continued strategic oversight and collaboration in support of the initiative's objectives

GEI REVIEW SERVICE

In 2025, the GEI review service continued to experience strong demand, with request volumes remaining high compared to previous years. The peer review process also became more robust, with an increase in the average number of reviews completed per request. Requests for international and national awards remained evenly split and spanned a wide range of disciplines, reflecting the breadth of the program's reach.



- With 119 review requests in 2025, demand for GEI review services remains strong and consistent with recent years



- Although the completion rate declined slightly in 2025, with 82% of requests receiving at least one review, steps are being taken to expand the reviewer pool and strengthen incentives for participation.

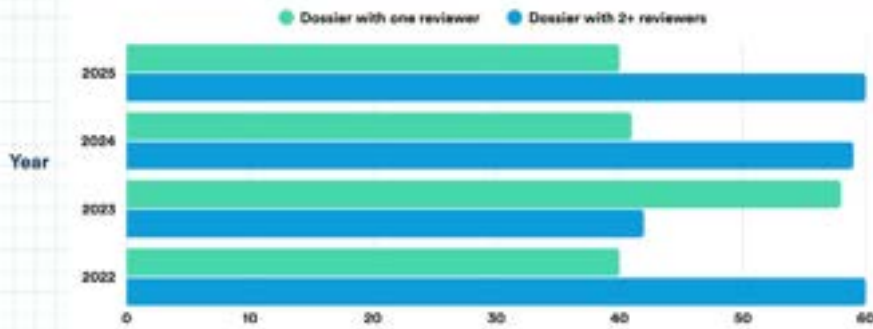
“The feedback explained the elements of the application that were understated, missing or misunderstood in ways that generated overall improvements to the documents. The reader also made strong suggestions for understanding how to interpret requirements in a different national context.”

“The experience of having knowledgeable and extremely helpful reviewers was excellent.”



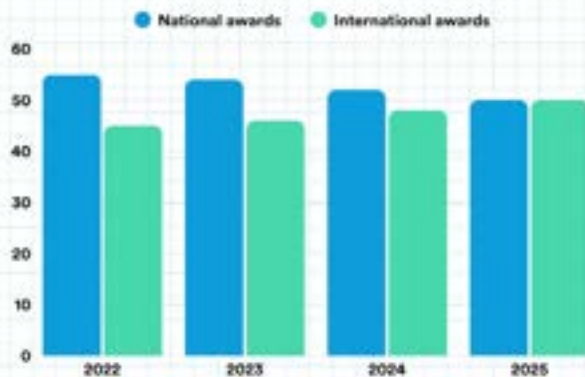
Three international research prize winners from 2025 utilized the GEI review service

Number of reviewers per dossier



- In 2025, 60% of completed reviews included feedback from two or more reviewers, strengthening the depth and quality of feedback.

National vs. international awards



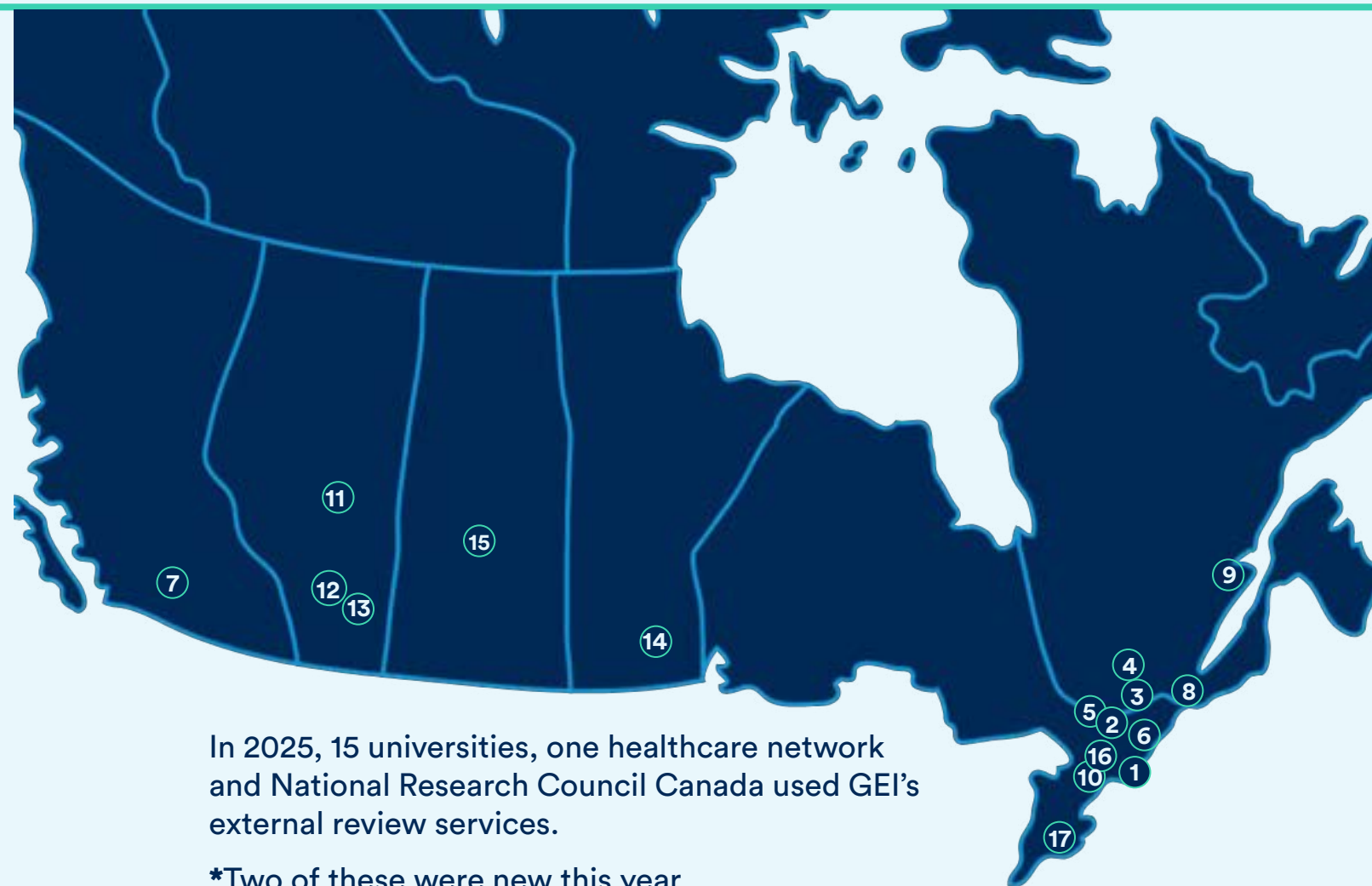
- Requests for national and international award reviews remain closely balanced.

“We sincerely appreciate the time and effort the reviewers dedicated to providing their valuable comments and suggestions for this file. We recognize the additional time required to complete this task, and we are truly grateful for their generosity. The insights shared through the GEI review process are immensely valuable and we deeply thank them for their contributions.”

GEI review service improvements

- Introduced new timelines to support higher quality feedback
- Piloted new tool to support reviewers in providing targeted and constructive feedback on nomination dossiers
- Implemented an annual survey to gather feedback, suggestions for improvement and testimonials

INSTITUTIONS USING GEI EXTERNAL REVIEW SERVICES



In 2025, 15 universities, one healthcare network and National Research Council Canada used GEI's external review services.

*Two of these were new this year.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Brock University | 11. University of Alberta |
| 2. Carleton University | 12. University of Calgary |
| 3. Concordia University | 13. University of Lethbridge * |
| 4. McGill University | 14. University of Manitoba |
| 5. National Research Council Canada | 15. University of Saskatchewan * |
| 6. Queen's University | 16. University of Toronto |
| 7. Simon Fraser University | 17. Western University |
| 8. Université de Sherbrooke | |
| 9. Université Laval | |
| 10. University Health Network | |

CELEBRATING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

INTERNATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

In 2025, Canadians won 25 prestigious international research prizes for their contributions and advancements across a wide range of fields. Winner profiles are available on the GEI website.



2024 A.M. Turing Award (announced in 2025)

- Richard Sutton, University of Alberta



Breakthrough Prizes in Life Sciences

- Daniel Drucker, University of Toronto



BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award

- Daniel Drucker, University of Toronto



CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars Program

- Artem Babaian, University of Toronto
- Peter Crockford, Carleton University
- Oliver Warr, University of Ottawa



Global Young Academy

- Élise Devoie, Queen's University
- Malgorzata Gazda, Université de Montréal
- Elena Kuzmin, Concordia University



Guggenheim Fellowship

- Angela Esterhammer, University of Toronto
- Sheila Heti
- Sasha Ivanochko
- Nadia Shihab, Simon Fraser University



New Horizons in Physics Prize

- Maaïke van Kooten, National Research Council Canada



Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences

- Peter Howitt, Brown University (Western University & McGill University alumni)



Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering

- Yoshua Bengio, Université de Montréal
- Geoffrey Hinton, University of Toronto



Sloan Research Fellowship

- Fabio Boschini, Institut national de la recherche scientifique
- Peter Crockford, Carleton University
- Michelle Delcourt, Toronto Metropolitan University
- Paul Masset, McGill University
- Sean Michaletz, The University of British Columbia
- David Rolnick, McGill University
- Bhavin Shastri, Queen's University



Shaw Prize

- John Richard Bond, University of Toronto



CONCLUSION AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Global Excellence Initiative saw demonstrated results in 2025 with three international prize winners having utilized the GEI review service. The demand for the program remains consistent and feedback from users is demonstrating impact within their institutions. We see new institutions utilizing the service and a shift towards additional peer reviews.

Looking ahead to 2026, GEI will continue to strengthen its services by expanding tools and resources to support high-quality feedback. The initiative will further broaden its reach by deepening institutional and community partnerships and expanding recognition of excellence, including in the arts, while continuing to build awareness through participation in key national and international research forums.

Through these efforts, GEI will continue to ensure that Canadian research excellence is recognized, celebrated and competitive on the global stage.

APPENDIX A: GOVERNANCE

GEI is guided by the work of two committees:

The champions group

The champions group acts as the initiative's steering and advisory committee. This group is chaired by Gabriel Miller, President and CEO of Universities Canada.

THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHAMPIONS GROUP:

- Gabriel Miller, President and CEO, Universities Canada
- The Right Honourable David Johnston, Past Chair, Rideau Hall Foundation
- Alejandro Adem, President, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council
- Sylvain Charbonneau, President, Canada Foundation for Innovation
- Valérie La Traverse, Vice-President Corporate Affairs, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
- Paul Hébert, President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Mitch Davies, President, National Research Council Canada
- Teresa Marques, President and CEO, Rideau Hall Foundation
- Janet Rossant, President and Scientific Director, the Gairdner Foundation
- Françoise Baylis, President, Royal Society of Canada
- Bernard Miller, Managing Trustee, Killam Trusts
- Marc-Andre Hawkes, Executive Director Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy and Partnerships, Global Affairs Canada

Universities Canada wishes to thank Alain Gagnon, past President of the Royal Society of Canada, for his contributions to the group.

The canvassing committee

The canvassing committee is responsible for identifying potential candidates for prestigious international research awards and supporting the candidate and their institution throughout the nomination process.

THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE CANVASSING COMMITTEE

- Aleeza Gerstein, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Science, University of Manitoba
- Jennifer Love, Professor and Head, Department of Chemistry, University of Calgary
- Gordon McCauley, President and CEO, adMare BioInnovations
- Molly Shoichet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Tissue Engineering, University of Toronto
- Juan Luis Suárez, Professor, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Western University
- Michael Woodside, Professor, Faculty of Science, Physics, University of Alberta
- Guy Rouleau, Director, Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital, Chair of the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery of McGill University, Director of the Department of Neuroscience of McGill University
- Christian Landry, Professor and Principal Investigator at the Landry Lab, Université Laval
- Suzanne Fortier, Principal Emeritus, McGill University
- Daniel Drucker, Professor and Senior Investigator at the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, University of Toronto
- Joan Judge, Professor, Department of History, York University
- Tony Bi, Director, UBC Clean Energy Research Centre (CERC), The University of British Columbia
- Max Blouw, President, Research Universities' Council of British Columbia

The committee was chaired by Howard Alper, Distinguished Professor, University of Ottawa, until his resignation in spring 2025. Dr. Alper played a foundational role in the creation of the Global Excellence Initiative alongside David Johnston and made a significant contribution to strengthening Canada's global research standing. The Global Excellence Initiative thanks Dr. Alper for his exceptional leadership and dedicated service to the program over the past 13 years.

Universities Canada wishes to thank Lenore Fahrig, Chancellor's Professor of Biology and Co-Director of the Geomatics and Landscape Ecology Research Laboratory (GLEL), Carleton University and Robert Prichard, Chair, Torys LLP for their contributions to the group over the years.

APPENDIX B: GEI EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS

GEI's external review process represents a rigorous, strategic approach to elevating nomination packages for international prizes. By leveraging the collective expertise of distinguished researchers and previous laureates, we provide a robust mechanism for refining and strengthening scholarly nominations.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The external review process is built on the following key principles:

Expertise and confidentiality

- Reviewers are carefully selected from a prestigious pool of Canadian and international experts who have a proven track record of international award success.
- The review process ensures complete anonymity, with reviewers having the option to self-identify if they choose.

Collaborative enhancement

- The review aims to provide constructive, expert feedback that can significantly improve the quality and competitiveness of nomination packages.
- Universities Canada serves as a critical coordinating body, facilitating seamless communication between nominating institutions, potential reviewers and granting councils.

STRUCTURED REVIEW TIMELINE

Our meticulously designed review process follows a precise timeline to maximize effectiveness:

Timeline	Stage	Key activities
6 weeks before award deadline	Preparation	Dossier development begins; potential reviewer list compiled
5 weeks before award deadline (Updated)	Submission	Complete dossier submitted for external review
2 weeks before award deadline (Updated)	Feedback	Reviewers provide detailed, confidential comments
Award deadline	Finalization	Final nomination package submitted

KEY BENEFITS

- Provides independent, expert assessment
- Offers opportunity for dossier refinement
- Increases nomination competitiveness
- Maintains strict confidentiality

This collaborative approach ensures that each nomination receives comprehensive, expert-level scrutiny, ultimately enhancing the quality of submissions for international awards.

APPENDIX C: NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

In 2025, a new cohort of Canadian research prize winners were announced. These prizes are prestigious in their own right and are often just the beginning of what's to come for these researchers.

Peter Gilgan Canada Gairdner Momentum Award

- Daniel De Cavalho, University of Toronto
- Jennifer Stinson, University of Toronto

Arthur B. McDonald Fellowship

- Andrew Tanentzap, Trent University
- Amanda Melin, University of Calgary
- Zachary Hudson, The University of British Columbia
- Renée Hložek, University of Toronto
- Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo, Université de Montréal
- Tohid Didar, McMaster University

Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prizes

- Mélanie Demers, MAYDAY
- Prof. Jennifer Clapp, University of Waterloo

Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal for Science and Engineering

- David Wishart, University of Alberta

Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts

- Daina Augaitis
- Thaddeus Holownia
- Bruce LaBruce
- Kent Monkman
- Peter Pierobon
- Clive Robertson

- Sandra Rodriguez

- Jin-me Yoon

Killam Prize

- René Doyon, Université de Montréal

- David Dyzenhaus, University of Toronto

- Marco Marra, The University of British Columbia

- Christina Sharpe, York University

- Peter Zandstra, The University of British Columbia

Margolese National Brain Disorders Prize

- Sheena Jesselyn, University of Toronto

NSERC Donna Strickland Prize for Societal Impact of Natural Science and Engineering Research

- Xiaoyi Bao, University of Ottawa

- Beth Parker, University of Guelph

NSERC John C. Polanyi Award

- Jeremy Quastel, University of Toronto

Royal Society of Canada Awards – The Alison Wilson Award

- Hannah Brais, University of Toronto

- Anffany Chen, University of Alberta

- Stephanie Ross, University of Calgary

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Eric Jackman Prize

- Sean B. Rourke, University of Toronto

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Henry Marshall Tory Medal

- Tucker Carrington, Queen’s University

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Jason A. Hannah Medal

- Alison Li

Royal Society of Canada Awards – John L. Synge Award

- Ben Adcock, Simon Fraser University

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Kitty Newman Memorial Award

- Florian Martin-Bariteau, University of Ottawa

Royal Society of Canada Awards – The McLaughlin Medal

- Nada Jabado, McGill University

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Mirosław Romanowski Medal

- [Marie-Josée Fortin, University of Toronto](#)

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Pierre Chauveau Medal

- [Eric Jennings, University of Toronto](#)

Royal Society of Canada Prize for Indigenous Engagement

- [Cindy Blackstock, McGill University](#)

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Rutherford Memorial Medals in Chemistry

- [Adam Shuhendler, University of Ottawa](#)

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Rutherford Memorial Medals in Physics

- [Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo, Université de Montréal](#)

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Sir John William Dawson Medal

- [Henrik Poinar, McMaster University](#)

Royal Society of Canada Awards – Yvan Allaire Medal

- [Sadok El Ghoul, University of Alberta](#)

Weston Family Awards in Northern Research

- [Tsz Ying \(Lilian\) Chan, University of Guelph](#)
- [Chloe Earnshaw-Osler, Queen's University](#)
- [Micah Eckert, The University of British Columbia](#)
- [Angelina Kemp, University of Windsor](#)
- [Olivia Leach, Memorial University of Newfoundland](#)
- [Kayla Lurette, University of Ottawa](#)
- [Chloé LeBlanc-Grant, Université Laval](#)
- [Mackenzie Mihorean, Wilfrid Laurier University](#)
- [Jolie Nguyen, McMaster University](#)
- [Rosalye Pelletier-Lemay, Université Laval](#)
- [Nicole Stafiej, McGill University](#)
- [Anna Smith, University of Alberta](#)
- [Brennan Stanfield, University of Alberta](#)
- [Shyloh van Delft, University of Alberta](#)
- [Emma Vokey, Wilfrid Laurier University](#)
- [Emily Wong, Carleton University](#)

- Amber Buston-White, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Evan Jones, Queen's University
- Mathilde Lapointe-St-Pierre, McGill University
- Éloïse Lessard, Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Madeline Patenall, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Nicola Rammell, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Brooke Biddlecombe, University of Alberta
- Matilde Poirier, University of Calgary
- Ruth Rivkin, University of Manitoba
- Carol-Anne Villeneuve, Acadia University

SSHRC Impact Awards – Gold Award

- Myriam Denov, McGill University

SSHRC Impact Awards – Talent Award

- Joshua Steckley, Carleton University

SSHRC Impact Award – Insight Award

- Kamari Maxime Clarke, University of Toronto

SSHRC Impact Awards – Connection Award

- Tara McGee, University of Alberta
- Amy Cardinal Christianson, Indigenous Leadership Initiative

SSHRC Impact Awards – Partnership Award

- Jason Edward Lewis, Concordia University

Northern Science Award

- Homa Kheyrollah Pour, Wilfrid Laurier University

Steacie Prize for Natural Science

- Nicholas Papernot, University of Toronto

Royal-Mach-Gaensslen Prize for Mental Health

- Lena Palaniyappan, McGill University