

Novartis Canada awards more than \$680,000 to community-based programs aimed at advancing health equity

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- *The Novartis Health Equity Initiative was launched earlier this year as a call for ideas to help tackle persistent health disparities and promote equal access to healthcare in Canada*
- *Submissions were received from over 130 charitable and non-profit organizations across the country*
- *The winning organizations are Fort Severn First Nation, Foundations for Social Change and Black Physicians of Canada*

Montréal, Quebec, December 4, 2024 – Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc. (Novartis) is pleased to announce the three recipients of its inaugural Health Equity Initiative. Based on the high impact potential of the selected projects, the initial total funding commitment of \$500,000 CAD was increased to more than \$680,000 CAD.

“At Novartis, we believe that equitable access to healthcare is a fundamental right for every individual, regardless of their circumstances,” says Mark Vineis, Country President, Novartis Canada. “With the launch of our Health Equity Initiative and an investment of more than \$680,000, we are proud to support organizations that are dedicated to dismantling barriers of access and promoting inclusive health solutions. Together, we can drive meaningful change and help work towards a system where all Canadians have the opportunity to receive the timely and appropriate care they deserve.”

The three organizations selected to receive funding in 2024 are:

- **Fort Severn First Nation**, a remote fly-in community based in Fort Severn, Ontario. With funding from the Novartis Health Equity Initiative, they will work to establish a team of health coordinators within the community to bridge the gap between families and the healthcare system. Their efforts aim to improve access to timely diagnoses, treatment and preventative care, ultimately striving for better health outcomes for the community.

“We are a remote northernmost community in Ontario and because we have no road access, our community members have to fly out for health care. As a result, diagnoses and treatment are not received in a timely manner, children's health and disabilities are not addressed, chronic problems develop, and sometimes lives are lost prematurely. These funds will be used to establish a group of Meno ya win coordinators, who will be vetted and trained by the Learn and Uplift Foundation. They will be assigned to families and liaise with medical teams to ensure timely diagnosis and treatment,” said Cheryl Thomas, Councilor of the Fort Severn First Nation.

- **Foundations for Social Change**, a non-profit organization that develops innovative programs to help vulnerable populations based in Vancouver, British Columbia. With funding from the Novartis Health Equity Initiative, they will work to improve health outcomes, foster long-term stability and reduce disparities by addressing the significant health equity gap faced by individuals experiencing and transitioning out of homelessness and extreme poverty.

“The New Leaf Expansion project specifically addresses the health equity issue faced by individuals experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty, who disproportionately suffer from poor health outcomes due to systemic barriers to health care. We are incredibly grateful for this gift from Novartis, which will allow us to continue to focus on our goal of reducing disparities in health outcomes and promoting long-term stability for marginalized populations and will give us the opportunity to explore scaling up our work and potentially bringing this project to other communities,” said Amber Dyce, Chief Executive Officer of the Foundations for Social Change.

- **Black Physicians of Canada**, an organization dedicated to uniting, supporting, amplifying and empowering Black physicians, physicians in training, patients and the Black community across Canada. Funding from the Novartis Health Equity Initiative will enable them to create the first national Black physician database in Canada, providing access to culturally sensitive care to improve diagnoses and treatment while empowering patients and healthcare professionals within the Black community to achieve better health outcomes.

"We are committed to ensuring that the Black community has access to culturally sensitive care. This generous gift from Novartis will enable us to support people seeking access to health care and to collaborate with Black communities to create resources for healthcare professionals and patients," said Julie Sobowale, Executive Director of the Black Physicians of Canada.



About the Novartis Health Equity Initiative

At Novartis Canada, we are committed to advancing health equity as an essential component of our purpose to reimagine medicine. This initiative represents an organizational dedication to fostering sustainable, community-led initiatives that drive equitable health care across Canada. The commitment of Novartis extends beyond the traditional boundaries of healthcare, embracing the power of community voices and cross-sector partnerships that deliver genuine and lasting equity.

In order to develop the most appropriate capabilities to design the Novartis Health Equity Initiative, Novartis Canada consulted and received training from Equity Mobilizing Partnerships in Community (EMPaCT) an innovative, award-winning model of patient and community engagement housed at Women's College Hospital, Toronto, Canada. Through a series of upskilling workshops, EMPaCT instructed on key concepts and practices identified as critical to run a successful health equity-focused community investment program, and to orient and equip staff on the competencies to design an inclusive grant program.

To learn more about the Novartis Health Equity Initiative, please visit <https://www.novartis.com/ca-en/esg/novartis->

[health-equity-initiative.](#)

About Novartis

Novartis is a focused innovative medicines company. Every day, we work to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people's lives so that patients, healthcare professionals and societies are empowered in the face of serious disease. Our medicines reach more than 250 million people worldwide. Reimagine medicine with us.

In Canada, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc. employs approximately 600 people to serve the evolving needs of patients and the healthcare system and invests over \$30 million in R&D yearly in the country. For more information visit www.novartis.ca.

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