



Danish Life Sciences Forum Recommendations for 2020 Federal Budget

The Danish Life Sciences Forum (DLSF) was formalized in 2018 as a way for Danish pharmaceutical affiliates to collaborate around opportunities and challenges in the Canadian market, for the benefit of patients everywhere. With the support of the Danish Trade Council acting as the forum secretariat, the group consists of Novo Nordisk Canada Inc., LEO Pharma Canada Inc., and Lundbeck Canada – all foundation-owned companies with a long-term mission to find cures in their therapeutic areas. The mission of the DLSF is to share the life sciences sector’s experience in Denmark and globally through engagement with public and private sector stakeholders in Canada. Our vision is to leverage Danish-Canadian life sciences best practices to advance health, innovation and the Canadian economy.

February 27, 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

On behalf of the Danish Life Sciences Forum (DLSF), thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the federal government’s 2020 budget. For budget 2020, the federal government has an important opportunity to use Canada’s diverse life sciences sector to grow and diversify the economy, accelerate job growth, and increase Canada’s competitiveness. The sector is also key to addressing many of our society’s greatest challenges, including keeping Canadians healthy and tackling climate change. In this context, based on our experiences in Denmark, we offer the following recommendations for your consideration:

Recommendation 1: Create an industry-led Life Sciences Growth Team

In Denmark, the life sciences sector is viewed as a direct contributor to the wealth of the nation, the health of its citizens, and a source of revenue for government. This “health is wealth” mentality has contributed to Denmark’s growth into a global life sciences powerhouse. Denmark is currently number two in the world for developing biotechnology and number one in Europe in the number of clinical trials per capita. With a population of only 5.5 million people, the sector employs close to 50,000 people.¹

A major driving force behind Denmark’s success in this area has been a long-standing tradition for public-private partnerships, based in part on the trust of the constituency for such arrangements, as well as a willingness from government to use private sector expertise when developing policies to fuel their long-term strategies. A recent example is the 2016 creation of an industry-led Danish Life Sciences Growth Team, tasked with identifying opportunities and

¹ <https://investindk.com/insights/new-analysis-the-life-science-industry-in-denmark-creates-great-value>



challenges to continued growth in the sector. In 2018, the group released its recommendations for how Denmark can accelerate growth across the sector – from research to commercialization, approval and delivery to international export markets.²

The DLSF believes that a similar strategy could be applied in Canada with great success. Such a growth team could build on the work already accomplished by the federal Health and Biosciences Economic Strategy Table (HBEST).³ The ambitious goals of HBEST, including doubling the size of the sector by 2025, will require a dedicated, focused and coordinated approach, which could be informed and inspired by the Danish Life Sciences Growth Team model. Such a Growth Team would meet regularly and provide added value by helping to drive forward and operationalize the HBEST recommendations.

Recommendation 2: Adopt a national digital health strategy

Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, cognitive technologies, automation, and computer power, are driving significant advancements within the life sciences sector and have enormous potential to deliver better, faster and more efficient care for patients. These new tools will become increasingly important as we seek to address key health system challenges, including keeping up with an aging population and the demand that will place on health systems.

Recognizing these benefits, Denmark has made health system digitization a national priority. The digitalization of the Danish healthcare sector began more than 25 years ago, and today the country is considered an international front-runner when it comes to digital health.⁴ To further support these efforts, in 2018, the Danish government launched a new national digital health strategy aimed at further health system integration and improving the use of health data in the context of prevention, care and direct treatment for patients.⁵

While Canada has emerged as a world leader in artificial intelligence and other digital tools, the health sector remains one of the least digitized sectors in Canada.⁶ Like Denmark, we believe that Canada can and should take advantage of digitization by adopting a national digital health strategy focused on guiding federal investments in digital health and accelerating the integration of digital tools in the health system. The strategy will require strong leadership and should address privacy and conflict of interest issues, provide a framework for data governance and data sharing, and increase the information available to patients so they can make informed decisions about their own health outcomes. The plan should also seek to implement a fully interoperable digital health platform across provinces and territories.

² <https://em.dk/~media/files/2018/marts/03-15-2018-factsheet-for-the-danish-governments-growth-plan-for-life-science.ashx?la=da>

³ <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/098.nsf/eng/00016.html>

⁴ <https://investindk.com/set-up-a-business/life-sciences/ehealth>

⁵ <https://www.healthcaredenmark.dk/news/listnews/danish-digital-health-strategy-2018-2022-now-available-in-english/>

⁶ http://canada.um.dk/~media/Canada/TC%20Canada/Documents/DigitalDenmark_May092019.pdf?la=en



Recommendation 3: Address barriers to life sciences growth

As noted above, the federal government's Health and Biosciences Economic Strategy Table (HBEST) has recognized the potential for the life sciences industry to grow the economy and improve the health of Canadians, and has set an ambitious goal of doubling the size of the sector by 2025.⁷ However, achieving this objective will require not only growth initiatives, but also the removal of growth barriers that hinder innovation and the adoption of promising innovations in the health care system.

In this context, the DLSF is convinced that recent reforms to the *Patented Medicines Regulations* will stifle life sciences growth objectives, while impacting the availability of new medicines and clinical trials in Canada. The DLSF recommends that the federal government engage with the Canadian life-sciences industry on a more meaningful level and take steps to remove unnecessary regulatory barriers across the entire value chain of the industry, including research, regulatory approval, pricing, evaluations, and funding decisions. The government should also work with industry to find the best solutions to addressing its dual objectives of improving medication affordability while growing the life sciences industry.

On behalf of the Danish Life Sciences Forum, thank you once again for considering our input on the federal government's 2020 budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robby Spring', with a stylized, cursive script.

Robby Spring

Trade Advisor, Health & Life Sciences
Danish Trade Council, Toronto

⁷ <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/098.nsf/eng/00025.html>