



**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in
Advance of the 2019 Budget**

**By: Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated
Learning (CEWIL) Canada**

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government provide funding in the amount of \$225 million over five years to expand and extend the student work-integrated learning program to support 30,000 student experiences.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government provide funding in the amount of \$15 million over five years to support the creation and implementation of a collaboratively-led pan Canadian strategy for work-integrated learning in order to achieve the goal of providing 100% of post-secondary students with a quality WIL experience.

WIL Increases Canada's Competitiveness

Ensuring Canada's future prosperity depends in large measure on our ability to develop and retain the talent we need in a dynamic and competitive economy. Work-integrated learning (WIL) programs across Canada's post-secondary educational institutions (PSIs) provide a powerful mechanism for developing talent with the relevant skills needed in business and society. Through WIL, students gain work experience related to their studies, while employers test potential new hires and realize the productivity gains that can come with fresh thinking and current learning. Studies done by firms in the United States demonstrate that work-integrated learning students provide the best source of incoming talent for their organizations. Former student hires perform better, get promoted faster, and stay with the organization longer. The benefits of WIL are reflected in research in Canada as well. We know that WIL has a positive impact on student learning, employability and graduate career outcomes and that students add value to organizations.

CEWIL Canada applauds the Government of Canada for its recent support of work-integrated learning including the Student Work-Integrated Learning Program (SWILP), the investment in Mitacs Research internships, and the HUMA study on Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth. It is clear that the federal government can and should play a role in supporting initiatives that drive demand for quality WIL opportunities in industry. The momentum established with these recent federal programs should be amplified with additional investments, particularly those that expand funding eligibility to students and employers not currently covered by the existing programs.

Beyond driving industry demand, there is a need for strategic investments to support an overarching vision for the role of work-integrated learning in Canada's economy. In order to fully leverage existing investments and reduce redundancies, Canada needs a strategic plan for WIL and investments to support the operationalization of this plan. It is critical to bring together major stakeholders, including industry, government and post-secondary institutions, to devise this strategy and to identify key funding and activity priorities. Some already identified needs include national WIL data collection, investments in technological platforms for WIL, professional development for employers and practitioners, additional research on WIL and the development of a quality assurance framework. By supporting these initiatives, the Canadian government can establish the necessary conditions to create systemic change through WIL. These additional national investments are crucial in order to create an ecosystem capable of providing every post-secondary student in Canada with at least one quality WIL experience prior to graduation.

WIL Expertise in Canada

As a work-integrated learning leader in Canada, CEWIL is a membership-based association of professionals and experts. Our collective of over 720 members includes post-secondary educational institutions – colleges, universities and polytechnics located in every province in Canada, employers, and the government. CEWIL Canada’s mission is to build the capacity to develop future-ready students through quality work-integrated learning.

Backed by 45 years of expertise, CEWIL gives its stakeholders access to a robust bank of knowledge and resources –including many best practices on WIL, a national statistics database, an expansive network of practitioners, and the only active accreditation program for WIL in the world. CEWIL members include many of Canada’s experts on the research, pedagogy and operationalization of diverse forms of work-integrated learning programming. CEWIL Canada is willing and able to leverage its expertise in support of pan Canadian initiatives for work-integrated learning. CEWIL Canada asserts that work-integrated learning is a key strategy in creating future-ready students and that federal investments in two specific areas can make a meaningful impact to this end.

Recommendation 1: That the government provide funding in the amount of \$225 million over five years to **expand and extend the student work-integrated learning program** to support 30,000 student opportunities.

The federal government has the opportunity to make a lasting impact by encouraging and fostering a culture of paid employment for student workers as well as providing increased supports for indigenous students and students with disabilities who are disproportionately enrolled in programs currently excluded from SWILP funding. Further, SWILP is a valuable mechanism to support student knowledge transfer both internationally (inbound and outbound) and intra-provincially. Specifically, we recommend the government:

- Expand funding eligibility for students in all disciplines including those in the humanities and social sciences
- Ensure all Canadian employers are eligible for SWILP wage subsidies, including the health and community services sectors where WIL opportunities are prevalent but often unpaid
- Expand funding eligibility to include international students
- Increase student mobility by providing student travel stipends for intra-provincial and international work terms

Recommendation 2: That the government provide funding in the amount of \$15 million over five years to support the **creation and implementation of a collaboratively-led pan Canadian strategy** for work-integrated learning in order to achieve the goal of providing 100% of post-secondary students with a quality WIL experience.

There is great work being done across the country to build interest in and capacity for more work-integrated learning. While these efforts are both laudable and necessary, in the absence of a larger national framework for work-integrated learning, the impact of these initiatives is often limited. Further, there exists a myriad of challenges for increasing quality WIL opportunities including confusion around terminology, a plethora of job posting platforms, limited national data, a lack of professional development for employers and practitioners, a desire for quality standards, and a need for additional research on WIL to inform future policy development and funding decisions.

These challenges are recognized and felt by all Canadian stakeholders of WIL including students, industry, government and post-secondary institutions and have fueled a desire to work collaboratively and across traditional boundaries to identify solutions. In 2018, CEWIL Canada hosted two national conversations on work-integrated learning with attendance from a broad spectrum of stakeholders including provincial ministries of advanced education, the federal government, funding agencies, industry associations and post-secondary institution consortia. There is great momentum coming out of these conversations and the time is right for the government to turn momentum into action by providing resources to develop national solutions for work-integrated learning. Specifically, CEWIL recommends that the federal government:

Fund the development of a national strategy for work-integrated learning. A national strategy would bring together government, industry, and post-secondary institutions to increase the scale, enhance the quality, and improve the outcomes of work-integrated learning programs in Canada. The 2015 Australian National WIL strategy provides a useful model for Canada to consider (<http://cdn1.acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/National-WIL-Strategy-in-university-education-032015.pdf>). In developing Canada's WIL strategy a working group would be charged with undertaking broad consultation to ensure that the strategy reflects the unique needs of Canada's diverse population and economy. The group would work together to raise awareness of the value of WIL, align and enhance the reach of existing initiatives, build capacity across the system for more WIL, and measure the impact and outcomes of WIL in enhancing Canada's productivity and competitiveness.

In implementing a national strategy, investments by the federal government could be leveraged to create the necessary conditions for sustainable, quality WIL experiences for all post-secondary students. Specific actions that would have a significant impact on enhancing the outcomes of existing initiatives include:

- **collecting national WIL data:** by expanding upon CEWIL's national co-op statistics database and working in tandem with the provinces, Statistics Canada, and the soon to be established Skills Council, baseline data could be gathered on the status of work-integrated learning in Canada and mechanisms developed to classify, track, and report on WIL in Canada in an ongoing capacity
- **developing technological tools to connect the right students with the right employers:** by enhancing its investment in the Magnet/Orbis partnership to support streamlined WIL job postings and creating tools to connect employers with the right WIL students the federal government could improve access to work-integrated learning opportunities for all post-secondary students in Canada
- **creating professional development modules for both employers and WIL practitioners:** in order to create more WIL opportunities in Canada, employers, particularly small and medium sized employers, need resources to better understand how to onboard and support students. There is also a pressing need for professional development for WIL practitioners to learn how to connect students with community and industry partners and to create quality WIL experiences
- **providing dedicated funds for additional research on work-integrated learning in Canada:** by providing funds for research on WIL, we can better understand its impact on Canada's productivity and competitiveness. Grant funds could be made available for industry/PSI partnerships to explore the impact of federally funded WIL projects and/or to investigate issues related to WIL program development, sustainability or outcomes
- **developing quality standards for all WIL experiences in Canada:** by promoting defining quality characteristics for WIL, verified through research, the government can ensure both students and employers achieve desired outcomes

Future Skills Delivered Through Quality WIL

Work-integrated learning has been increasingly identified by industry, government and post-secondary institutions as a successful way to equip students with the skills necessary to navigate our rapidly changing labour market. In order to truly realize the potential of WIL, Canada needs an overarching strategy which supports the creation of sustainable opportunities in the WIL ecosystem which spans the boundaries between educators and employers, school and work. Canada already has significant expertise in WIL and is poised to be a leader on the global stage when it comes to effectively preparing youth for the future world of work and developing mutually beneficial relationships between post-secondary institutions and community and industry groups.

CEWIL urges the government to build upon the momentum created with its existing initiatives and, in particular, to expand the Student Work-Integrated Learning Program to more students and more employers. We also ask the government to dedicate resources to develop and implement a national strategy to ensure that quality WIL opportunities are extended to all post-secondary students, employers are able to access the right student talent to meet their needs, and we, as a nation, understand the impact and outcomes of work-integrated learning on Canada's productivity and global competitiveness.