



University of Ontario Institute of
Technology Submission to the House of
Commons Standing Committee on Finance

February 19, 2016

Introduction:

Universities play a fundamental role in the Canadian economy due to their teaching and research mandates, as well as the significant economic impacts from their operations. Universities impart upon their students the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to directly contribute to Canada's economic growth and productivity. They are at the heart of the discovery and innovation agenda. Through partnerships with industrial and community partners, universities leverage their assets and resources to improve the quality of life for all Canadians. We help advance Canada's long-term economic growth and prosperity and can help achieve many of the objectives outlined in the mandate letters to Cabinet Ministers.

Since inception, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) has embedded research, innovation, technology and entrepreneurship into everything we do. We are a STEM intensive institution that integrates work experiences into the curriculum of our programs. We have had success in our first 12 years as evidenced by our job ready graduates. Ninety-six per cent of UOIT graduates are employed two years after graduation, which is higher than the average in Ontario.

Research is a key mechanism by which UOIT imparts the knowledge and skills our students need to become innovative citizen leaders. New investments into research ultimately lead to the creation of new jobs.

Recognizing the challenging economic environment both here in Canada and internationally, we feel this is an opportune time for investments that will drive economic renewal, productivity and competitiveness. Budget 2016 is the federal government's opportunity to enhance Canada's international position through continued support of the country's research and innovation agenda and the educational infrastructure that underpins it.

UOIT endorses Universities Canada's recommendations for the following and looks forward to helping the Government of Canada address these important priorities:

- Support for university infrastructure
- Support for university research and innovation
- Support for youth opportunities
- Support for indigenous education

Support for University Infrastructure

- The quality of infrastructure at Canada's universities plays a key role in advancing crucial research discoveries, innovation and 21st century learning for students.
- The successful *Knowledge Infrastructure Program* – launched to stimulate a struggling Canadian economy in 2009 – demonstrated that Canadian universities can deliver infrastructure projects quickly and well. At the time, projects that were initiated on campuses across the country within six months of the first announcement provided a much needed economic boost and contributed to Canada's long-term research capacity.
- To help kick start Canada's current economic growth and jobs challenge and strategically invest in the long game of building a more prosperous country, **we recommend a dedicated fund for university infrastructure** through the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.
- **UOIT has multiple shovel-worthy, innovative projects which are currently under consideration. Federal support for the Centre for Advanced Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship was announced in 2015 and we continue to work with officials at Infrastructure Canada on the project. This infrastructure investment creates a centre where industry, government and community partners can access the university's academic expertise and use its state-of-the-art facilities. This facility will allow for collaborative research by faculty members and their students to tackle complex industrial and societal challenges and develop solutions to real-world problems. This will enable the university to support and expand capacity for research, partnerships, technology transfer and community outreach and contribute to Canada's economic prosperity.**

University Research and Innovation

- Canada's three federal research granting councils play an essential role in furthering discovery research that can lead to long-term positive impacts for Canada's economic growth and social well-being.
- We recommend that the federal government **commit to increased and untargeted support for the base budgets of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.**
- We also recommend support for the **Canadian Foundation for Innovation through sustained investment in research infrastructure and the development of a 'roadmap' for big science in Canada, led by CFI to**

underpin a vibrant research and innovation ecosystem and support cutting edge research across disciplines.

- **Expanded support for accelerators, incubators and the national network for business innovation and cluster support** - with priority on linkages with universities – will foster innovative entrepreneurship and stimulate economic growth.

Youth Opportunities

- We recommend **support for employer-focused measures such as vouchers and tax credits to create more paid co-ops and internships for post-secondary students across all academic disciplines** to help ensure greater numbers of Canadian young people are able to get the experience they need to start their careers and contribute to the economy.
- A bold **new program of support for short-term domestic and international student mobility** will help Canadian students better understand their country and the world, and allow them to develop skills which will benefit their communities and Canada. Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017 provides an opportunity to celebrate the country's youth and invest in the next generation of nation builders.

Indigenous Education

Along with the federal government and Indigenous communities, Canada's universities are committed to fostering reconciliation across Canada. Education is central to this goal but critical challenges stand in the way. Only 9.8 per cent of Aboriginal people aged 25 – 64 in Canada have a university degree, compared to 26.5 per cent of non-Aboriginals of the same age. To address this education gap, we recommend:

- **Sustained growth in student financial assistance**, through initiatives such as additional investment in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program to enhance educational opportunities and academic success for Indigenous students.
- New funds to **scale up institutional programming** (e.g. targeted programs and services, community outreach and mentorship) to improve university outcomes for Indigenous students and build new partnerships with Indigenous communities.
- Enhanced **support for existing programming through the Post-Secondary Partnership Program** at Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

- **New graduate scholarships for Indigenous students** to build the talent pipeline and prepare the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

Conclusion

Maintaining and improving Canada's research and innovation competitiveness is key to ensuring a healthy, prosperous and innovative society. Research and innovation are the mechanism by which increased productivity is achieved, new markets are opened, new products created and society enhanced.

Reliable, sustainable, long-term funding for the university research enterprise will ensure Canada's international competitiveness for years to come. Through this funding, more students will gain valuable research skills; our research community will employ state-of-the-art infrastructure needed to attract and retain top researchers from around the globe; universities will continue to invest in the supports needed for a high-quality, research-enriched environment; private sector will be encouraged to partner, and Canada will prosper in a globally competitive world.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments for your consideration in developing the 2016 Budget.

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