



BRIEF BY THE UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL

ADMINISTRATION

Prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
for the 2017 prebudget consultations

August 4, 2016

Rector's office

Introduction

The Université de Montréal would like to thank you for the opportunity to share our comments as part of the prebudget consultations. These consultations allow us to present not only our recommendations on priorities for the academic community, but also ideas on how the academic world can help build an innovative, inclusive and prosperous Canada.

The Université de Montréal, with its affiliated schools HEC Montreal and Polytechnique Montréal, encompasses all areas of knowledge and is the leading education and research institution in Quebec. Its extensive network of affiliated institutions involved in health and social services expands and amplifies its research and community intervention capacities.

The Université de Montréal is also a member of Universities Canada, the voice of Canadian universities in Canada and abroad, representing the interests of 97 non-profit public and private Canadian universities. Our university is also a member of U¹⁵, the Group of Canadian Research Universities. As members of those two associations, we support their positions as presented in their submissions to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

In the belief that policy and strategies related to research, science and innovation have the power to shape a brighter future for all, we are responding to the consultation launched by presenting our recommendations concerning the following four areas, in line with those identified by Universities Canada and U¹⁵:

1. Research and innovation, more particularly ongoing support for research through granting agencies;
2. Increased opportunities to improve academic learning through practical work experience as part of internships, co-op programs and mobility programs;
3. Innovation support through the development of regional innovation clusters;
4. Access to education for Aboriginal students through the development of adequate financial assistance programs and the implementation of conditions conducive to their success.

We firmly believe that the implementation of such programs and policies will help the country strategically position itself by giving rise to discoveries and by encouraging innovation so as to increase Canada's long-term prosperity.

1. Research and innovation

We believe that university research and innovation are vital to economic growth, to Canada's competitiveness on the international stage and to the socioeconomic well-being of Canadians. To that effect, the latest budget provided Canadian universities with a most welcome assistance by supporting both scientific research and infrastructure renewal. We hope to be able to rely on that support in the years to come, so that the country can remain a leader in innovation, and in applied and basic research.

Therefore, we recommend continued investments in research funds and increased funding for granting agencies. **In agreement with Universities Canada and U¹⁵, we recommend that the federal government commit to:**

- 1) **Increased and non-targeted funding for the core budgets of the three granting agencies—the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council—in order to regain competitiveness on the international stage;**
- 2) **Support for the Canada Foundation for Innovation through sustained investments in research infrastructure and the development of a roadmap to help plan major Canadian science projects led by the foundation;**
- 3) **The inclusion of all research costs, including indirect ones, in research funds. Those costs should be part of a multi-year plan to close the funding gap.**

We believe that these initiatives will encourage the creation of dynamic research and innovation environments, support advanced research across a variety of disciplines, and reduce the impacts associated with the current underfunding of basic and applied research.

2. Mobilizing talent: opportunities for students

We are pleased with the government's recent commitments to double the number of summer jobs available to full-time students for 2016-2018. We feel that work-integrated learning experiences such as co-op programs, internships, research projects and mentoring programs are excellent opportunities for students to develop the skills they need to achieve success in the labour market. In fact, internship programs do not only benefit students by helping them increase their understanding of their profession and acquire additional skills. Employers also see internships as beneficial to their company, with students being considered as a source of talent with expertise related to their employment sector. As a result, the demand for that kind of experience exceeds the supply.

Moreover, the next generation of entrepreneurs and researchers must be exposed to different ideas and skills that can be acquired through studies abroad. Employers are increasingly valuing international and intercultural competencies, and we think that dynamic learning experiences will benefit not only students, but also Canadian society and economy. To complete this initiative, it would help if the government implemented policies to increase student and researcher exchanges, both from and to

Canada. Encouraging the hosting of international students and researchers enriches both the host institutions and the employers, so it would be desirable to establish measures to simplify the processes for entering the country.

We now invite the government to take matters further by encouraging the adoption of measures to increase the availability of student employment programs, to reduce barriers to internships in SMEs and non-profit organizations, and to increase the mobility of international students and researchers. To that effect, we recommend that the federal government:

- **Invest in new measures (e.g. tax credits) to help employers provide university students with more opportunities in terms of co-op programs, paid internships and workplace learning;**
- **Facilitate the mobility of Canadian students abroad through incentive programs;**
- **Develop the policies needed to reduce administrative barriers for qualified students and personnel.**

We think that these measures will help young people better prepare for professional life and contribute to the working world they will be joining after their studies, in addition to enabling the growth of the country's innovation capacity through the potential of new contributions from and exchanges with international students and researchers.

3. Dynamic regional economies

In order to sustainably stimulate regional economies, we suggest building on regional economic strengths so as to encourage the creation of innovation clusters. We see the Budget 2016 announcement of \$850 million for innovation clusters and networks as excellent news. We must maintain this momentum by fostering interactions among partners from private, public, research and non-profit sectors at the same table to encourage innovative interactions and collaborations.

To that effect, we support U¹⁵'s recommendation to create three funding mechanisms: 1) a fund for cluster projects presented by multi-sectoral partners, including the academic research community, 2) funding for small projects that are either part of an existing cluster or aim to establish a new cluster with the potential to become globally competitive, and 3) a fund for the advancement of science that would be used to fund initiatives recommended by the partners of the cluster in question.

To ensure the competitiveness of regions, we therefore recommend that the following suggestions be analyzed with a view to integrating them into innovation funding policies:

- **Increase funding for accelerators, incubators and the national innovation network for companies, and support for innovation clusters by prioritizing academic relationship building;**

- **Establish mechanisms to support clusters as they develop, but also implement tools to evaluate those clusters' performance.**

This will help use the assets and strengths of various regions so as to create a sustainable knowledge-based economy.

4. Aboriginal education

The Canadian government's recent initiatives to improve and renew the relationship with Aboriginal peoples, so that they may benefit from a quality education, have been met with enthusiasm by universities. In fact, the objective of Canadian universities is to improve Aboriginal access to post-secondary education. For example, a reception and resources service has been created at the Université de Montréal for Aboriginal students in order to facilitate their transition and adjustment to the university culture. This centre helps them obtain information not only on financial assistance and French-language programs, but also on initiatives encouraging student retention and on the resources available for integration and socialization, both with members of the academic community and members of Aboriginal communities. However, we support Universities Canada's recommendation to increase the availability of such services intended to attract Aboriginal students, but also foster their academic success. To that effect, we recommend that the federal government:

- **Increase funding for the financial assistance provided to Aboriginal university students to improve their education opportunities and academic success;**
- **Provide new funding to strengthen the programs of establishments that support the success of Aboriginal students and the creation of partnerships with Aboriginal communities ;**
- **Create new graduate studies scholarships for Aboriginal students in order to build a talent pool and prepare the next generation of Aboriginal leaders.**

The presentation of these positions, which support the recommendations and positions of Universities Canada and U¹⁵ concerning the funding of research and innovation, the mobilization of student talent, regional dynamism through the creation of innovation clusters and Aboriginal university education, will help encourage innovation, diversification and economic prosperity in Canada. We appreciate this opportunity to participate in the prebudget consultations of the Standing Committee on Finance, and we will be available to provide any additional information on the points raised in this document.

[signed]

Guy Breton, CM, MD, FRCPC

Rector