

**York University**  
**Pre-Budget Submission to the House Standing Committee on Finance**  
**July 2016**

The Government of Canada's 2017 Budget presents an important opportunity to uphold the significant gains made by Canada's post-secondary education institutions and reinforce the vital contributions they make to Canada's continued success in the global knowledge-based economy.

Global economic turbulence has brought into sharp focus the challenges confronting Canada as it works to ensure its future prosperity and seeks to consolidate and improve its standing in current and emerging global value chains. Many of these challenges converge at Canada's institutions of higher learning and research, be they social, economic, cultural, scientific, technological, labour market, or demographic in nature. By safeguarding investments in its universities, Canada - in concert with provincial governments - is protecting its future by preparing the next generation with the knowledge, skills and experience it needs to excel in an increasingly competitive and globalized economy.

York University is Canada's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest university with 52,000 students including nearly 6000 graduate students, one of the largest graduate student cohorts in the country. York is ranked among Canada's top 10 Canadian research universities for Sciences, Engineering, and Humanities when measured by impact. With the indispensable support of the Government of Canada's investments in research and research infrastructure, York University is able to deliver world-class research with real-world applications. York University's great successes include its Centre for Research in Earth and Space Science, a key NASA and Canadian Space Agency partner and major scientific contributor to recent Mars Exploration missions and related discoveries; and its Centre for Vision Research, Canada's pre-eminent vision research centre, ranked among the Top 5 in the world, merging techniques in human psychophysics, visual neuroscience, computational theory and augmented reality with applications from health care to robotics to the entertainment industry.

The Government of Canada, through its support for university-based research and strategic research infrastructure, enables Canada's universities to build on their strengths and leverage their research expertise to maximize their knowledge production, mobilization and commercialization potential, while also enabling them to bring Canadian expertise to the global table in support of solutions to global problems. For this reason, it is vitally important for the Government of Canada to continue to build on its investments and affirm its partnership with Canada's universities in safeguarding Canada's continued success and prosperity in the global knowledge-based economy.

Recommendations

***Research***

**Continue to support the international competitiveness of Canada's universities through support for the development of world-class strategic research infrastructure.**

York University is grateful for the immense support of the Government of Canada in the development of the strategic infrastructure necessary for conducting world-class research and attracting and retaining global research talent to Canadian universities. By supporting leading-edge research infrastructure at Canada's universities, the federal government puts Canada forward as a marquee destination for global research leaders, deepening Canada's participation in international research networks and scientific partnerships. Through the Canada Foundation

for Innovation (CFI) and programs like the Strategic Infrastructure Fund and the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, the Government of Canada enables universities to further their mission to produce and mobilize high-impact research, attract the best and brightest researchers from around the world, train the next generation of discoverers at leading-edge facilities, and translate knowledge into opportunity for Canadians. Ongoing federal support for university research infrastructure, building upon investments to date, is crucial for the continued success of Canada's research-intensive universities on the global stage.

**Recommendation 1:** *Affirm and continue the Government of Canada's support for the development of strategic research infrastructure at Canadian universities, enabling universities to leverage matching funds from provincial governments, private sector partners, and other supporting contributions from non-profit sector organizations and private donors, in the development of world-class research facilities and centres.*

**Continue to build support for research through ongoing investments in SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR while ensuring rigorous, effective and credible peer review and administrative processes so that meaningful, high-impact research continues to be supported across the full range disciplines, including interdisciplinary research. Reinforce the proven success of the Canada Research Chairs program with up-to-date funding levels and by increasing the number of Chairs available.**

Peer reviewed fundamental and applied research is a cornerstone of research excellence. The support for peer reviewed research delivered by the Government of Canada through the three federal granting councils (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) is vital to the success of Canada's researchers. With stable funding and effective processes, tri-council support is an essential resource for helping Canada's universities fully realize their world-leading research potential. Importantly, this can only be achieved with an appropriate balance of curiosity-driven and targeted support. Moreover, programs like the Canada Research Chairs program have had proven success in helping universities build on their strengths, recruit world-class talent, and grow their research enterprise. However, despite the Canada Research Chairs program's demonstrable success, the level of support it provides has not been updated since the inception of the program. Investing in this program to bring the level of support that it provides up to date, and to increase the overall number of Chairs available, would be an effective way of ensuring maximum returns on federal research dollars.

**Recommendation 2:** *Continue to provide stable funding and ensure effective processes for the delivery of tri-council support for researchers, and reinforce the proven success of the Canada Research Chairs program with updated levels of support and by increasing the number of Chairs available. This would include bringing SSHRC funding in line with funding for NSERC and CIHR.*

**Support the indirect costs of research at internationally competitive levels.**

Conducting world-class research requires universities to develop and maintain a range of critical supports that are not associated with any one research project, supports that range from laboratories, security, furniture, and custodial services, to libraries and library holdings. Canadian universities have worked diligently to manage these crucial research supports effectively in order to keep the indirect costs of research as low as possible, and have proven to be responsible stewards of scarce public resources, delivering high-impact returns on investment. However, the indirect costs of research vary from 40% to 60% of the direct costs of research, depending on the discipline, which represents a major unfunded challenge for universities. While the Government of Canada has made important progress in helping universities to shoulder these costs, the level of support is not yet at the level of our competitor international research-intensive universities. As

a result, York University affirms the responsibility of research partners and funders of partnered research to contribute to the indirect costs associated with research, and calls on research granting agencies (NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR) to fully fund the indirect costs associated with their grants.

**Recommendation 3:** *Fully fund the indirect costs of research associated with Tri-Council grants.*

### **Talent Mobilization through opportunities**

Among G7 countries, Canada has one of the youngest populations and requires greater investment in developing talent of our nation's youth. Universities play an important role in talent development and mobilization and helping to ensure that young Canadians acquire the skills they need including competencies for our future entrepreneurs, researchers and innovators to engage in the global economy. The 2016 Budget saw greater commitment, on the part of the federal government, to investing in Canada's young people by:

- improving financial access to postsecondary education
- supporting work-integrated learning through industry-university collaborations
- creating opportunities for university students to develop research skills

We recognize the value that international student mobility has on helping young Canadians expand global knowledge. University students who have the opportunity to study and/or work-study abroad within undergraduate or graduate studies often describe the experience as transformational in terms of expanding their global experience. They also are able to articulate the development of core, transferable skills such as the ability to adapt to new situations, understanding and valuing diversity and enhancing communication skills. Notwithstanding the rich learning and personal growth that international mobility opportunities offer, few Canadian students participate.

**Recommendation 4:** *Consider the creation of an accessible national program for international student mobility to send 50,000 Canadian students abroad (including students from under-represented groups) annually by 2022.*

**Recommendation 5:** *Expand efforts related to work-integrated learning (WIL). The proposed Post-Secondary Industry Partnership and Cooperative Placement Initiative, which supports co-op placements and WIL partnerships between employers and postsecondary educations should be expanded beyond STEM and Business fields to engage students across all academic disciplines. There is evidence that employers value the skills provided by strong liberal arts, social science and professional programs, and the WIL, co-op placements and university-employer collaborations across various career and academic fields. An expanded program that recognizes that many students' need to work, both to cover costs associated with attending university and to build career skills, may see greater industry/employer uptake through incentive measures (vouchers and tax credits) that encourage all sectors to create more WIL placements for university students across all academic programs.*

Our capacity to design academic programs, plan effectively and respond to the changing needs of society would be enhanced with data provided at national, provincial and regional levels.

**Recommendation 6:** *Enhance the role of and resources for Statistics Canada so that institutions can properly respond to demographic shifts in the years to come (e.g. immigration and settlement trends, increasing number of Canadians over the age of 65).*

*Statistics Canada, in addition to providing very rich information about demographic trends (including postsecondary education participation and completion rates) in order to collect, analyze and disseminate labour market information that will inform our academic program planning and delivery.*

## **Indigenous Education**

The release of the Final Report on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in December, and our reflection on the findings and recommendations of the Report over the past year reaffirms the need for ongoing reconciliation. Furthermore, we also know that First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities have very young and emerging urban populations compared to non-Indigenous communities. With 0-24 year olds making up 46.2% of the total Aboriginal population, the legacy of residential schools and the low postsecondary education participation rates of Aboriginal Canadians, there are many important reasons for us to be focusing on Indigenous education in the 2017 Budget.

York University, along with other Canadian universities, is committed to working with the federal government and Indigenous communities to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls for Action. The TRC provides specific recommendations pertaining to education (including postsecondary education), preservation of language and culture, and the education and training of specific professions (e.g. social work, nursing, law) and we acknowledge the role that universities play in reconciliation. Our institutions must be more responsive to the needs of Indigenous students, both in and outside of the classroom, and to the indigenization of our campuses and curriculum. Canada's universities are committed to ensuring Indigenous student access, retention and success. At York University, while we have made positive strides in embedding and integrating Indigenous knowledge within our curriculum, have programs/ services to support Indigenous students, and a program designed to hire Aboriginal scholars, we know that more has to be done.

Comprehensive support for Indigenous students will help build a talent pipeline and prepare the next generation of Indigenous leaders, improve economic outcomes and general wellbeing of Indigenous communities and engage Indigenous professionals in building a strong future for Canada. Investment in Indigenous initiatives within universities also creates a welcoming and supportive environment, not just for Indigenous undergraduate students, but also for Indigenous graduate students and faculty members by valuing Indigenous knowledge in the academy.

***Recommendation 7:*** *Commitment for additional direct financial assistance for Indigenous students and to working with Indigenous communities (e.g. band councils), organizations serving Indigenous peoples and postsecondary institutions to ensure seamless financial support for students pursuing postsecondary education.*

***Recommendation 8:*** *Invest in new scholarships to encourage and support more Indigenous students to pursue graduate and post-doctoral studies.*

***Recommendation 9:*** *Develop and launch a new competitive funding program, with clearly articulated goals and measurable outcomes that allow universities with a deep commitment to institutional change and transformation to scale up existing institutional-level programs and initiatives that support Indigenous student access, retention and academic success.*

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