

Canadian Association of Research Libraries

Responses

1. Economic Recovery and Growth

Given the current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint, what specific federal measures do you feel are needed for a sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth in Canada?

CARL believes that even in difficult economic times, it is important that the government continue to support Canadian research, whether in universities, in industry or in government itself. It is through research that discovery and innovation occur. Research leads both to new products and services that generate revenue and to new approaches to social, economic or healthcare problems that can reduce need for government spending. While the link between investment in Canadian research and marketable new Canadian products is not always direct, the economically-significant discovery and innovation that has occurred in Canada has generally depended upon Canadian research, usually supported by government funding and incentives. CARL strongly urges maintenance of program funding for the granting councils and the CFI. As well, Budget 2012 addressed some of the Jenkins Report recommendations, but others remain worth exploring. One specific way to maximize the return on government investment in Canadian research is to require that the results of that research be as easily available to innovators, entrepreneurs, and policy makers outside of our universities as they are to university faculty and students. This can be achieved at little cost to government by asking the federal research granting councils to develop "open access" policies such that grant recipients must make available in a publicly accessible online repository within a given period of time their articles reporting on their funded research. The CIHR already has a workable policy; the other granting councils need to make more progress in this regard. Another low-cost, but effective means of making innovation-valuable information available to both the academy and industry is to increase the number and range of types of government research datasets that are publicly available online for re-use. CARL commends the Open Government initiative, and the Open Data Pilot Project will come into its own once a critical mass of useful data becomes available through the data portal. Also as Open Government, CARL urges a systematic approach to the preservation of and enduring public access to the electronic government record, whether website content, publications, or other parliamentary or departmental documents--important for research now and in future.

2. Job Creation

As Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factors as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, and competition from a number of developed and developing countries, what specific federal actions do you believe should be taken to promote job creation in Canada, including that which occurs as a result of enhanced internal and international trade?

While not a short-term solution, CARL recommends that the government take measures to encourage and facilitate Canadians' education and training for the job market. In terms of facilitating education and job training, the federal government should continue its efforts to ensure that all Canadians, no matter where in the country they live, have affordable access to high-speed broadband Internet. The Broadband Canada program has helped to extend basic access to remote parts of the country; there remains much to be done. The government's decision to favour newer telecommunications companies in spectrum auctions and to allow greater foreign ownership of smaller wireless providers are both low-

cost methods by which the government can reduce cost barriers for Canadians who depend upon wireless services for distance learning; encouraging greater competition in “wired” Internet service provision also remains important. Not only does affordable access to high-speed broadband Internet allow consumers to participate in distance education programs (including obtaining digital content from libraries), but it also allows them to develop businesses and to source or sell goods and services online. CARL strongly endorses the recommendations of the May 2012 e-commerce study report by the Commons Industry, Science and Technology Committee; we hope the government will act promptly on them. Numerous studies have shown that the most important means by which Canadians can improve their employability and their earnings is the attainment of college or university education. While education is formally a provincial matter, the federal government has the ability to help students through student loan and scholarship programs. CARL believes that current programs should be maintained and, if possible, augmented. Graduate-level scholarships not only help to train the technical and administrative experts that Canadian industry requires to remain competitive, but also support the formation of a new generation of university researchers and instructors, of which Canada has a growing shortage. Finally, it should be noted that research funding occasions the employment of many university students, who not only contribute to the success of the funded research, but also continue to study and achieve their degrees because of the part-time employment they have as research assistants.

3. Demographic Change

What specific federal measures do you think should be implemented to help the country address the consequences of, and challenges associated with, the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages?

The recession of 2008-2009 will have done its part to encourage older workers to remain in the workforce for longer than many had planned; the government nevertheless has an interest in encouraging Canadians in a more deliberate manner to remain productively employed to a later age. The age at which Canadians will in future collect Old Age Security payments has already been moved to 67 years, but there may be more positive methods to encourage longer working lives such as tax incentives for employment beyond the normal retirement age. Incentives for later-age career change or advancement training and education would again be helpful in keeping Canadians employed longer. Health Canada must focus on preventive physical and mental health programming so that the working population stays active longer. The federal government must encourage Canadians to undertake career-long learning by maintaining and even enhancing tax deductions for individuals in educational programs; tax incentives for employers to encourage skills development of older or long-standing employees might also be considered. While learning of all kinds is valuable for maintaining cognitive abilities as people age, college and university certificate, diploma and degree programs also increase employability and enhance career advancement and change. CARL thus recommends maintained or strengthened federal student loan and scholarship programs to facilitate lifelong career training and education. For the young underemployed, the various co-pay internship programs (e.g., YCW or CCAY—recently re-launched) remain valuable career engagement tools. One way to replace those retiring from the workforce will be to better integrate immigrants into the Canadian economy, ideally in ways that take full advantage of the skills and qualifications with which they arrive. CARL recommends the government play a coordinating role, perhaps also providing seed funding, in a national collaboration with professional and vocational associations, colleges and universities, and provincial immigration and settlement agencies to consider ways to lower barriers to employment of immigrants with foreign qualifications or streamline re-qualification processes. The government’s plan to assess foreign educational credentials before an immigrant’s arrival will be one helpful initiative, but it must be sufficiently funded in order to keep pace with demand.

4. Productivity

With labour market challenges arising in part as a result of the aging of Canada's population and an ongoing focus on the actions needed for competitiveness, what specific federal initiatives are needed in order to increase productivity in Canada?

The government must create a comprehensive plan to encourage the development of the digital economy in Canada. The 2010 national consultation generated many promising ideas, but to this point, a plan has not materialized. The plan must ensure that all Canadians have reliable, affordable access to broadband Internet so that they can both learn skills and conduct business online. CARL recommends that the government encourage Canadian businesses to adopt new technology and to develop their e-commerce capacities; the May 2012 e-commerce study report by the Commons Industry, Science and Technology Committee makes important recommendations. CARL also favours measures announced to introduce greater competition in the provision of telecommunication and Internet service provision in Canada such as spectrum auctions favouring newer entrants and allowing foreign companies to compete in the Canadian market. Canada produces fewer graduates in technology-related university and college programs, especially at the graduate level, in relation its population than do several other developed—and even developing—countries. CARL recommends that scholarships, especially graduate scholarships, specifically for enrollment in programs related to science and technology and its application be continued (the STEM enrollment funding in Budget 2011 has been helpful). The government might also continue to encourage the participation in education and training in entrepreneurship and small business development (also from Budget 2011, the DTAPP program is a worthwhile initiative). Foreign students attending Canadian universities are also a source of highly-skilled and productive workers: some of them immigrate to Canada once their studies are completed. While foreign students are an important source of revenue for Canadian universities and their surrounding communities, there may also be later positive consequences for the Canadian economy inasmuch as the foreign alumni, with their experience of Canada, may favour business relationships with Canadian companies. Since the best students in the world can easily choose to study in other countries, Canada will want to facilitate their ability to study here. CARL encourages the government to continue to work with the universities and colleges in the streamlining of student recruitment and arrival. Assistance to Canadian students wishing to study abroad will also benefit Canadian international business.

5. Other Challenges

With some Canadian individuals, businesses and communities facing particular challenges at this time, in your view, who is facing the most challenges, what are the challenges that are being faced and what specific federal actions are needed to address these challenges?

Problems of employment and employment-readiness are most pressing in some of Canada's First Nations communities, especially in the North. While the issues are complex, CARL urges the federal government to continue to work with community leaders and with universities to develop educational programs useful and accessible to their members—access to broadband Internet and computers will be an important element here. The measures announced in Budget 2012 are important, but for greater participation in educational programs, the government must continue to work with First Nations' leaders in addressing health and social problems that plague some communities, the successful management of which is crucial to economic development and employment. The government must continue to devote resources to encourage full integration into the Canadian workforce of our immigrants. Given that non-fluency in English or French compromises the employment prospects of many, the federal government will want to engage with provinces, municipalities, and community organizations to ensure access to quality language instruction. As well, immigrants who arrive with

technical or professional qualifications should have the ability to apply their skills and knowledge in Canada. While additional training may often be needed in order to achieve Canadian standards, the barriers to re-qualification and entry into a trade or profession seem sometimes unjustifiably high. CARL recommends the government consider what resources and powers it can bring to bear for increased opportunities for re-qualification training, conditional and supervised professional work during a re-qualification period or other means to take advantage of the skills that immigrants to Canada may arrive with. Finally, the number of young Canadians who leave school without graduating or who graduate, but do not continue on to college or university programs is significant. Inasmuch as the economy is producing fewer full-time jobs for unskilled workers and as there is a growing need for workers who have skills of value in a “knowledge economy,” CARL encourages the federal government to facilitate the participation of unskilled individuals in appropriate educational programs. This may be through enhancing federal student loan and scholarship programs or through meaningful tax incentives for participation and completion of educational programs.