

**Sheldon Levy, President and Vice Chancellor, Ryerson University**  
**Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance**  
**Pre-Budget Consultations 2015**

**Summary of Recommendations**

We have three recommendations for the government that focus on relevant research, innovation, entrepreneurship and improved access to jobs for young people and new Canadians.

- 1) Promote investment in successful campus-based accelerators/incubators and relevant research
- 2) Make the Canadian economy more supportive of startups and improve the rate of adoption of new technologies in existing enterprises
- 3) Reduce barriers to entry in the job market for young people and immigrants

**Ryerson's Expertise**

Ryerson University is a leader in career-focused post-secondary education and has more than 95 doctorate, masters and undergraduate programs across six faculties involving close to 39,000 full-time students. In particular, Ryerson's culture is distinct and creates an innovation ecosystem of faculty, students and external partners.

Several of Ryerson's qualities inform our recommendations: we have extensive experience with promoting and supporting startup businesses, such as our well-known Digital Media Zone; we are an industry leader in career-relevant experiential programs; and we are committed to relevant research that connects our faculty with industry experts in an effort to solve real-world problems.

Ryerson's dual emphasis on research excellence and relevance has illustrated that there is enormous economic and social value created – in both the short and long term - when government funds are allocated to research activities that focus on existing needs. Our experience highlights the important role of post-secondary institutions in supporting government economic development initiatives such as FedDev.

**Recommendation One**

Promote investment in successful campus-based accelerators/incubators and relevant research

**Themes**

1. Increasing the competitiveness of Canadian businesses through research, development, innovation and commercialization
2. Maximizing the number and types of jobs for Canadians

**Rationale**

Campus-based accelerators and incubators address many issues facing the Canadian economy. They bring industry partners, academic experts and young entrepreneurs together to encourage innovation, support startups, create access to career-related experience for students, bridge the skills gap created by the demands of the digital economy, generate jobs for young people and take full advantage of the creativity and determination of our youth. Campus-based accelerators are a low-cost, high benefit proposition.

Relevant research initiatives undertaken by post-secondary institutions provide both short term economic benefits such as job creation and economic growth and long term benefits in the form

of capacity building and an increased standard of living. As a result, investment in research that focuses on pressing problems creates significant value.

### **Specific Recommendations**

- That the government consider pursuing tax and policy measures that encourage businesses and investors to engage in campus-based accelerators similar to the New York State tax measures program NY STARTUP (<http://startup.ny.gov/>) which provides for multi-year tax relief measures to companies that set up their offices in areas around university campuses
- That the government ensure significant proportions of new investments in research excellence are actually relevant to driving innovation and productivity in Canada.

### **Recommendation Two**

Make the Canadian economy more supportive of startups and improve the rate of adoption for new technologies by existing enterprises

#### **Themes**

1. Increasing the competitiveness of Canadian businesses through research, development, innovation and commercialization
2. Maximizing the number and types of jobs for Canadians

#### **Rationale**

In the Canadian economy, there is a general resistance to adopting new technologies and entering into business arrangements with new companies. This limitation hampers the ability of existing companies to access cutting-edge ideas and forces dynamic Canadian startups to seek opportunities elsewhere in the world. This is especially relevant given that a significant portion of entrepreneurs are young people and immigrants whose ability to establish themselves in the economy, create jobs and lead the innovation wave can be limited by these barriers.

### **Specific Recommendations**

- The government consider adopting tax and policy measures similar to those that led Israel to become known as “startup nation” that promote the development and integration of new businesses into the economy, especially the Technological Incubators Program <http://www.incubators.org.il/>
- That effective measures be taken to ensure that government is a model user and first customer new businesses. (This may include outreach, changes to RFP criteria, etc.)
- That the government explore specific measures to assist new businesses with acquiring financing and getting their first customer
- That the government work with post-secondary institutions and industry partners across the country to explore various methods for improving the rate of adoption of new technologies across industry and social sectors and in government.

### **Recommendation Three**

Reduce barriers to entry in the job market for young people and immigrants

#### **Themes**

1. Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training
2. Maximizing the number and types of jobs for Canadians

**Rationale**

Finding a first job can be daunting and difficult for young people and new Canadians. The various obstacles to entry into the job market can be offset by evidence-based measures that improve access to jobs including the use of new approaches to promote better real time data, reduce fragmentation of services and promote access to effective supports.

**Specific Recommendations**

- Promote the development of mechanisms to connect potential employers and employees such as Ryerson's WhoPlusYou technology and Magnet initiative with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- Provide incentives and supports for the creation of entry-level, career relevant, experiential opportunities, such as paid internships to provide needed practical experience that supports transition into the workplace
- Offer tax and policy measures to encourage Canadian businesses to invest in developing young workers and new Canadians
- Promote programs in which young people can act as mentors to job seekers and new business owners to the mutual benefit of both groups