



Presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance

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Speaking notes – CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you for inviting me here today. I am thrilled to have the chance to contribute to the important work you're doing on this committee.

The Government of Canada has set a goal to boost Canada's productivity, competitiveness and prosperity, and to do so in a way that helps more diverse groups of people enjoy the benefits of a growing economy.

I applaud this ambition. I believe we can all get behind these goals. The message I want to convey today is simply this: To achieve these things, we are going to need a strong research system.

Mon organisation, la Fédération des sciences humaines, représente la plus grande communauté de chercheurs du pays comprenant plus de 90 000 personnes. Ces chercheurs enseignent à la plus grande communauté d'étudiants de niveau postsecondaire au pays. Environ la moitié de tous ces étudiants au Canada sont inscrits dans des programmes d'études en sciences humaines.

These researchers and students are a tremendous resource for Canada. Canada's economy is increasingly a service economy and a knowledge economy. Service industries now account for 70 per cent of our GDP, and Canadian employers tell us that they are looking for the kinds of skills taught in the humanities and social sciences, including critical thinking, creativity and communication skills.

Research in the humanities and social sciences will also be vital in helping us address some of the biggest challenges facing Canada today — issues such as climate change, reconciliation, youth employment, and integration of refugees and immigrants.

To address these, we'll need the evidence produced by researchers in the humanities and social sciences — both to help us diagnose "what's working and what isn't" and to help develop credible policy options. This knowledge base is not all we need, but we cannot get by without it.

Unfortunately, all is not well in Canada's research system. The Fundamental Science Review was completed earlier this year, and some of its findings are quite troubling. In short, Canada is falling behind. Our investments in research are stagnating while other nations are moving ahead.

In particular, investment in the humanities and social sciences — which covers research about Canada's people, our most important asset — is badly out of line with our needs, receiving just 15 per cent of federal research funding. As a result, only about a quarter of Canada's talent pool in these areas is able to find funding for their research in a given year. This represents lost opportunity for Canada, as other countries surge ahead with investments in basic science and research.



Fortunately, the Science Review has given us clear, evidence-based recommendations on how to turn things around. We have more detailed recommendations in our brief, but let me focus on two recommendations in particular which underscore the critical need to grow and rebalance the research system.

What would that look like?

- 1) First, as per the expert panel's advice, we recommend increasing the base funding of Canada's research-granting agencies by \$485 million over four years.
- 2) Second, as investments are made to the granting councils we recommend that humanities and social science research receives an equal share of new injections alongside the physical and health sciences, to better balance Canada's overall research portfolio — a principle also underscored by the expert panel.

I believe these investments are vital to Canada's long-term prosperity. I think we often overlook the fact that one of Canada's most important economic drivers is the cohesiveness of our diverse society. In Canada, people from many different backgrounds are able to work together to create amazing things. And not every country has that. This is perhaps our greatest competitive advantage. So how did we build it? What sustains it? And what risks are we facing today that threaten it?

Canadian scholars in the humanities and social sciences are exploring exactly these questions, and I believe that if we truly want to continue to build a sustainable, prosperous and inclusive economy, their contributions will be vital.

Thank you, and I now welcome your questions.