Federal Budget 2018

Let's reinvest in Canadian research

February 5, 2018

The 2018 federal budget, expected in the next month or two, will be the first since an independent panel released its recommendations for strengthening Canada's research system last April. The Federation is a strong supporter of the panel's recommendations and joined a broad coalition of organizations across the country calling for their implementation.

As Budget day approaches, we at the Federation are reminding the Government of Canada how important it is to invest in Canadian research, especially in the humanities and social sciences.

Key Messages

There is a pressing need to reinvest in Canada's research system and improve the balance of funding across disciplines.
The Science Review panel has made a compelling case that a well-funded research system is essential to Canada's economic growth, innovation and well-being. The Federation supports the Science Review panel's recommendation to put in place a multi-year funding plan that makes major new investments in investigator-led research via the granting agencies.

This new research funding must include steps to improve the balance within the federal research funding system with particular attention to humanities and social science research. Funding increases for Canada's research councils should be provided equally across the three granting agencies until a more equitable balance has been achieved.

Knowledge and skills from the humanities and social sciences are vital for supporting innovation and competitiveness.
The federal government has identified innovation, skill development, and the competitiveness and productivity of Canadian companies as key priorities. Knowledge and skills in the humanities and social sciences are crucial to achieving improvements in these areas. Approximately half of Canada's post-secondary students are enrolled in humanities and social science programs. The training these students receive provides them with capabilities that Canadian business leaders say they are looking for in an increasingly knowledge- and service-oriented economy, including the ability to collaborate effectively, analyze complex information, think creatively and communicate clearly.

The Canadian economy and labour market are feeling the effects of rapid technological change. Knowledge of human thinking, behaviour, relationships and experiences will be vital in helping Canadians make the best use of new technology and adapt to technology-driven transformations across the economy.

The humanities and social sciences are needed more than ever to address the most pressing challenges facing Canadians today.
The greatest challenges facing Canadians today include important social dimensions that must be better understood in order to find solutions. These include pressing challenges such as addressing climate change, adapting to transformative new technologies, and ensuring equity for historically disadvantaged groups. Knowledge from the humanities and social sciences is needed to contend with the psychological, historical and cultural factors that shape these challenges – they cannot be addressed through technical knowledge alone.

Advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is an example of a vital issue that requires contributions from the humanities and social sciences. Scholars in these disciplines have a crucial role to play identifying paths that lead to reconciliation, expanding and preserving the understanding of Indigenous histories and ways of knowing, and creating an education system that empowers Indigenous students and faculty.

Budget 2018 advocacy and reporting

The Federation is continuing its advocacy efforts leading up to Budget 2018. The Federation policy team will analyze the budget immediately upon its release, looking specifically for developments affecting research and education. The Federation will then report its findings directly to its members on an interactive teleconference within 24 hours, and to its community and stakeholders online shortly thereafter.