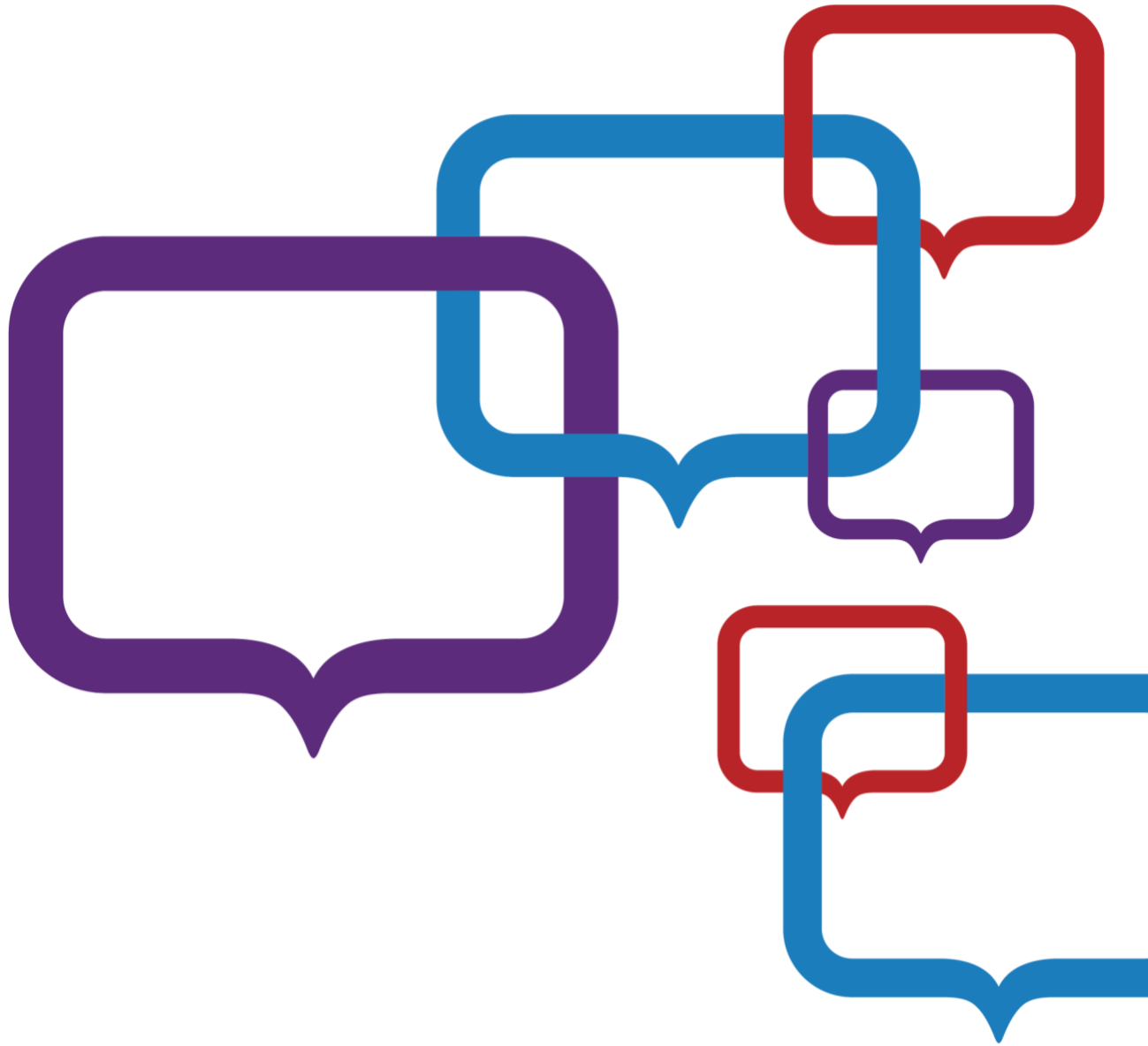




FEDERATION FOR THE
**HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

FÉDÉRATION
**DES SCIENCES
HUMAINES**



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2024 Federal Budget

Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences



Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Address the urgent underinvestment in Canada's next generation of researchers and innovators by increasing graduate scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships and research grants.
- **Recommendation 2:** Commit to sustained, multi-year investment in research through the granting councils and across all disciplines including the humanities and social sciences.
- **Recommendation 3:** Invest in open access publishing and infrastructures.



Introduction

A strong research ecosystem fosters the knowledge, skills and talent we need to address our society's most urgent and important challenges, and build a more just and prosperous Canada.

The humanities and social sciences have a particularly vital role to play. Researchers in these disciplines contribute new knowledge and innovative ideas, advancing understanding and powering solutions to issues such as climate change, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, the rapid advance of AI, and the impact of digital technologies on our democracy. Every challenge we face has a human dimension: humanities and social sciences researchers provide the insights and evidence required to drive positive change for individuals, communities and society.

Federal leadership and investment are critical in bolstering Canada's research ecosystem and nurturing the vital contributions of researchers across all disciplines. However, action by the Government of Canada is not keeping pace with the country's needs. Federal investments in fundamental research have flat lined since 2018, despite recommendations to increase funding from two government-appointed advisory groups, the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System and the Fundamental Science Review.

With our peer countries now making landmark investments in research through initiatives such as the CHIPS and Science Act in the United States, and the UK Innovation Strategy in the United Kingdom, Canada is at risk of falling behind in building and strengthening our knowledge economy.

The most urgent example is Canada's underfunding of the graduate students and postdoctoral scholars who help drive research and innovation, and bring in-demand skills and expertise to all sectors of the economy.

Unfortunately, in the words of the 2023 *Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System*, support for these emerging researchers has reached a breaking point, with decades of chronic underinvestment having "significantly eroded Canada's position as a global hub for the attraction and retention of research-enabled talent."¹

The federal government must act if we are going to correct this downward trend. By increasing investments in graduate scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships and research grants, the government can secure Canada's ability to attract, develop and retain vital talent, and ensure we remain internationally competitive.

To support Canada's research talent and secure the essential building blocks of Canada's research ecosystem, the Federation is also calling on the government to make sustained, multi-year investments in research through the federal granting councils: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Bolstering the budgets of the federal granting councils will enable Canada to harness the insights and talent from all disciplines and postsecondary institutions across the country.

¹ Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. 2023. [Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System](#).



Open access is another critical aspect of federal science and research policy that demands action. Investment in open access publishing and infrastructures will enhance the reach and impact of Canada's world-leading research, and put knowledge in the hands of more people working to solve global challenges.

Our recommendations

Recommendation 1: Address the urgent underinvestment in Canada's next generation of researchers and innovators by increasing graduate scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships and research grants.

As the next generation of researchers and innovators, graduate students and postdoctoral scholars contribute new ideas, talent and expertise within Canada's research ecosystem and across all sectors of our economy.

Federal graduate scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships are critical to Canadian research and the development of highly skilled talent. Yet, the current level of funding support is untenable.² Today, Canada Graduate Scholarships are worth 50% less in real terms than when the program was introduced in 2003. After two decades of funding levels and rising living costs, many of today's recipients are living below the poverty line, and experiencing financial challenges that are detrimental to their research and professional development.

As a country we can and must do better. In line with the recommendation of the recent Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System, the Federation is calling on the federal government to increase the value of federally-funded graduate scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships to internationally competitive levels, and to index the value to inflation.

Investment in these programs is an important lever for supporting current and aspiring graduate students and postdoctoral scholars nationwide. For one, these programs often "set the national standard for what is considered adequate pay for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars."³ Second, insufficient funding often hinders individuals from pursuing graduate education and research careers, making federal investment essential to address this barrier and foster a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive research ecosystem in Canada. To ensure equitable access to these programs across equity-deserving groups, federal granting councils must continue to monitor applications to assess that success rates are proportionate to population rates, and introduce measures to mitigate access barriers and imbalances in support.

Research grants awarded by federal granting councils are another essential source of funding for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. With these grants "currently insufficient to support competitive salaries,"⁴ we urge the government to increase financial support to allow adequate pay for the knowledge leaders of tomorrow.

² Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. 2023. [Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System](#).

³ Support Our Science. 2023. <https://www.supportourscience.ca/learn-more>.

⁴ Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. 2023. [Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System](#).



Recommendation 2: Commit to sustained, multi-year investment in research through the granting councils and across all disciplines including the humanities and social sciences.

To secure Canada's position as global hub for research and talent, the government must introduce sustained, multi-year investment in research through the federal granting councils: SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR.

This investment is essential to support fundamental, investigator-driven research, which builds the foundation of knowledge and talent needed to drive economic growth and address the pressing issues of our time.

Increases to the granting council budgets is also a necessary step for ensuring competitiveness of Canada's graduate and postdoctoral funding. Providing strong financial support for Canada's research talent – both emerging and established – will ensure that scholars and graduates are able to contribute to the Canadian economy, rather than being forced to pursue opportunities in other countries.

McGill University's 2019 TRaCE study, for example, found that 38% of PhD graduates in the social sciences, humanities and fine arts left Canada after completing their studies for positions internationally, particularly in Europe and the US.⁵

Our urgent national priorities and global challenges demand collaboration and a range of knowledge and expertise. Federal investment must ensure balanced allocation of research funding across disciplines and postsecondary institutions of all regions, sizes, and languages in the country. It must preserve the interdependence of the granting councils and the diversity that is fundamental to a thriving research ecosystem.

Recommendation 3: Invest in open access publishing and infrastructures.

Open access publishing allows research findings and data to be found, read and shared by anyone in the world with Internet access, facilitating dissemination of knowledge to the public, policymakers and other researchers and removing barriers to collaboration. As highlighted in the 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, open access publishing of journal articles, scholarly books and research data amplifies access to knowledge for the benefits of research and society.⁶

Canada has made important commitments to open access, including the 2020 *Roadmap for Open Science* and the 2023-2025 Review of the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications. Yet many Canadian researchers, publishers and platforms are facing prohibitive costs in implementing open access, and in building and maintaining the infrastructures needed to support and sustain long-term open access to Canadian research.

⁵ TRaCE McGill. 2019. [TRaCE 2.0--Quantitative Report](#).

⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2021. [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#).



The federal government must invest in a national coordinated approach to support Canadian open access publishing and infrastructures. The Federation recommends a dedicated funding stream to facilitate open access publishing by researchers belonging to equity-deserving groups, in all disciplines, and working in French, English and Indigenous languages. This funding should contribute to the promotion and discoverability of French-language research, as recently recommended by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research.⁷ It should include stable, predictable open access funding for community-led scholarly publishers and platforms, and provide additional support to ensure open access initiatives respect and uphold Indigenous rights and data sovereignty.

By lowering barriers to knowledge access, we will better harness the contributions of Canada's researchers and foster the cross-sectoral collaboration required to tackle global challenges.

Conclusion

The Federation calls on the Government of Canada to secure the essential building blocks of a thriving research and innovation ecosystem, by addressing the severe underinvestment in Canada's next generation of researchers; committing to sustained, multi-year investment in research through the granting councils; and establishing national coordinated funding for open access.

Canada benefits from having world-class postsecondary institutions that produce talented researchers and knowledge leaders driven to confront the most pressing challenges facing our society. With greater federal leadership and strengthened investment in this critically important sector, our country can become a global leader in the knowledge economy and secure a better future for all people in Canada.

⁷ House of Commons. June 2023. [Revitalizing Research and Scientific Publication in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research](#), p. 57.



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HUMAINES**

200-141 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1P 5J3
www.federationhss.ca
contact@federationhss.ca
(613) 238-6112

About the Federation

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences promotes research and teaching for the advancement of an inclusive, democratic and prosperous society. With a membership now comprising over 160 universities, colleges and scholarly associations, the Federation represents a diverse community of 91,000 researchers and graduate students across Canada. The Federation organizes Canada's largest academic gathering, the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, bringing together more than 8,000 participants each year. For more information about the Federation, visit www.federationhss.ca.