

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the  
Upcoming Federal Budget 2021 by:

**The University Of Victoria**



University  
of Victoria

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## **University of Victoria's Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance**

### **Building a Stronger, More Resilient and Inclusive Canada for Future Generations**

#### **Recommendation 1: Supports for Students and Lifelong Learning:**

- Make targeted investments in emergency financial aid, grants and bursaries to support equitable student access to post-secondary;
- Invest in work-integrated learning opportunities for students with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to help aid Canada's recovery;
- Diversification of international student enrolment;
- Make targeted investments in rural and remote broadband services to provide access to distance learning and online education for all Canadians regardless of their geographic location;
- Invest in upskilling and reskilling opportunities for Canadians whose work has been affected by COVID-19 to build new skills and create a more resilient workforce against future disruption; and
- Build culturally appropriate and quality skills training programs to support Indigenous youth across Canada in accessing educational opportunities.

#### **Recommendation 2: Invest in High-Impact and Critical Research to Safeguard against Future Shocks:**

- Make targeted investments to increase research collaboration and partnership opportunities between government and post-secondary to ensure a robust talent pool of innovators and knowledge creation and mobilization to solve the challenges that matter to Canadians;
- Fostering strategic technology and talent development through a new fund dedicated to regional 'Innovation Adoption Hubs' working at the nexus between universities and the private sector; and
- Continue to invest in critical research and development of technological solutions to combat the climate crisis.

#### **Recommendation 3: Invest in Shovel-Worthy Infrastructure Projects that create Sustainable Futures and Social Innovations:**

- Invest in on-campus infrastructure to model best practices in the transition to the low-carbon economy, and to act as a living lab to create hands-on learning opportunities for post-secondary students;
- Invest in childcare infrastructure that encourages equal access to the workforce for all Canadians; and
- Invest in innovation and business development spaces to help entrepreneurs and SMEs launch and scale-up to create the next generation of Canadian firms, technologies and innovations that will increase our overall competitiveness on the global stage.



## **Introduction:**

The COVID-19 crisis is unlike any we have seen. It has significantly underscored the value of collaboration, ingenuity, research and post-secondary education. Since the beginning of this pandemic, the University of Victoria (UVic) and its partners in post-secondary across Canada have been engaged in critical research, repurposing our labs and facilities to assist front-line workers, deploying much-needed PPE and working alongside our local communities to address and mitigate the economic and social impacts of this pandemic. This fall, we will continue to provide high quality education to our 22,000 students through distance and online learning across the globe. As we move forward, we must act boldly and quickly in our nation's recovery, otherwise we risk setting back an entire generation of future leaders who have disproportionately shouldered the brunt of this crisis.

The lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic, will help us propel our country forward and build back better than before, as we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rethink and rebuild the economy we wish to leave to our children and grandchildren. However, we must ensure that we have a stable and strong post-secondary ecosystem that will form the backbone of our recovery by providing skills training opportunities, promoting inclusion and equity and

Whatever shape our recovery takes, we must have clear principles to address climate change, safeguard against future pandemics, and address poverty, inequity and inclusive growth. These are the issues of critical importance that must be addressed as we move forward from this crisis.

UVic is committed to working with the Government of Canada to achieve a more inclusive, sustainable and fair economy. Therefore, we recommend key investments in three critical areas:

- Supports for Students and Lifelong Learning;
- High-Impact and Critical Research to Safeguard Against Future Shocks; and
- Infrastructure for Social Innovation and Sustainable Futures that will provide skills training and innovation opportunities for the new and emerging economy.

### **1. Supports for Students and Lifelong Learning:**

The COVID-19 Pandemic has exposed a number of fragilities within our economy, while also accelerating the rate of disruption within our workforce. Young people have lost employment 2.5 times faster than those over 25 years of age. In July 2020, women's participation in the labour force as reached a three-decade low. Further, those who have lost employment were already facing precarious situations were the first to lose work as the economy shut down. With the global economy facing the sharpest downturn since the Great Depression, it is likely that many of these more precarious jobs will never return. It is essential that we work together across all industries and levels of government to settle our disrupted workforce.

Post-secondary across the country is committed to supporting students through educational journeys to equip Canadians with the self sufficiency, necessary skills and experiences needed in the new economy to build resiliency to future shocks and disruptions. It is necessary that Government and post-secondary work together to provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities through traditional degree programs and micro credentialing. By making targeted investments in financial aid programming, we can break down financial barriers to create a culture of lifelong

learning in our country, this will be imperative as technological disruption serves to displace more and more workers.

We must also create opportunities for not only students enrolled in traditional degree programs to access work-integrated learning, but those in micro-credential programs as well. With targeted investments incentivize more SMEs to bring on post-secondary students, we can provide them with the necessary skills they need while help these small firms access talent, rebuild post-pandemic and scale-up for the benefit of our entire economy. We must also continue to accelerate investments in rural and remote broadband to provide all geographical regions of our country with equal opportunities to access distance and online education. This would allow post-secondary across the entire ecosystem to deliver online programming to rural, remote and Indigenous communities that previously would not have access. Between 2016 and 2026, it is estimated that 350,000 Indigenous Canadians will come of age. As we move to recovery, we must act quickly to build culturally appropriate and quality skills programming to help this cohort of young people participate fully in our economy. This will not only create an estimated annual boost of \$27.7 billion to the Canadian economy, it will be a critical step towards inclusive and equitable growth in this country.

## **2. Critical Research to Better Prepare our Country for Future Shocks**

Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, there has been unprecedented and rapid research responses rolled out to combat this crisis. Collaboration not only within the global research community, but between governments and post-secondary across the country has been invaluable. We must continue to work together beyond COVID-19 to tackle current and emerging challenges. COVID-19 has presented us with an opportunity to do better than the status quo, accelerate investments in research, and break down traditional barriers between government, post-secondary and industries. UVic is proud to echo the call by Universities Canada for the creation of regional innovation hubs and leverage Canadian innovation between industry and post-secondary research. This will not only provide significant benefits in the context of COVID-19, but also help us move towards a net-zero 2050 and tackle the climate crisis.

The International Energy Agency anticipates that a shift to renewables could create \$16 trillion in global economic activity over the next decade, and Canada has an incredible opportunity to be the global leader in clean tech research and development. However, to seize upon this opportunity to lead, we must take courageous actions and continue to make stable investments in research. These investments will be essential to produce new knowledge and innovation that will drastically improve our social and economic well-being, while contributing to a cleaner and healthier future. Supporting research at post-secondary institutions not only contributes to knowledge mobilization and technological advances, but also contributes to training and skills development of our future healthcare workers, teachers, engineers and entrepreneurs who will all contribute to a healthier society and our overall economic recovery. These investments contribute to healthier communities and ensure education is accessible and equitable for all. We must continue to work together to produce highly-skilled graduates, and high-impact research that will be vital to our economic prosperity and community well-being through this and future crises.

## **3. Infrastructure for Sustainable Futures and Social Innovation:**

Infrastructure investments must be shovel-worthy and net positive results and deliver sustainable returns for future generations. Investments today must yield longer term results and provide us with opportunities to learn, innovate, develop and train our communities with the skills of the

future. While we have traditionally viewed bricks and mortar infrastructure investments as a means for economic stimulation, we must look to the social impacts of these investments. Canada, must look to green innovation driven infrastructure investments that will allow us to face the climate emergency before us and equip our students with the necessary future skills required for the transition to a low-carbon economy. These green investments must reduce GHG emissions, add to our natural landscape and act as a living lab for students and researchers to learn, create and innovate the infrastructure of tomorrow.

Our infrastructure investments have to also create opportunities for every Canadian to take part in our economy. Inclusive growth should be the cornerstone of Canada's recovery. We cannot continue to view significant issues related to childcare and affordability as social issues, we must look at them as economic issues. Our recovery must invest in affordable and quality childcare spaces for parents to return to post-secondary to get the skills they need in the new economy and return to the workforce. It is critical that we are making these investments for stronger and more inclusive future.

Canada must also target investments in infrastructure that accommodates innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurship to build our next generation of Canadian businesses. By supporting entrepreneurs today through flexible laboratory, office, mentorship, collaboration and childcare spaces we can build the next generation of innovators. Investments in these spaces on university campuses will allow businesses to scale from ideas to small and medium and beyond. This will have a significantly positive impact on Canadian innovation, and competitiveness by allow homegrown firms to scale-up and be supported by leading experts in their field.

As we move towards recover, infrastructure investments must not only look to traditional metrics of immediate economic impacts and jobs created, they must also look to outcomes and how they made a difference in local communities and across the country. At UVic, we are committed to working with the Government of Canada, our local communities and partners to create positive outcomes in addressing the pressing needs of our time.

### **Rebuilding a Stronger, More Inclusive Canada in Economic Recovery:**

While this crisis has left us looking into a deep canyon, we must act swiftly and boldly to build a bridge to the other side. Education and research are the foundation and girders of that bridge. Taken together, our recommendations will have a profound impact in creating a stronger, more inclusive and resilient Canada for everyone. While we are faced with a significant challenge, we must not lose sight of the opportunities to emerge a stronger and more united Canada. This is a pivotal moment in our nation's history, and it is our responsibility to make targeted, forward looking investments to benefit future generations and create inclusive growth. While the scars from COVID-19 can be seen on every main street across Canada, we have a chance to tighten our national fabric and heal together while creating previously unimagined opportunities for everyone.

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