

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget

Simon Fraser University
British Columbia

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: That the government provide support for Indigenous Business scholarships to support students; one-time funding for curriculum development to expand offerings of credit and non-credit programs in Indigenous business; and support for increased research and case study capacity on best practices in Indigenous business.

Recommendation 2: That the government renew previous federal investments in accelerators and incubators to further leverage expand the demonstrated economic benefits of the pan-Canadian Incubate Innovate Network of Canada (I-INC).

Recommendation 3: That the government invest in a second Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Infrastructure Fund (SIF) to further accelerate strategic research and innovation infrastructure activities at post-secondary institutions.

Recommendation 4: That the government invest in the first North American urban transit gondola project as a reliable transit alternative that will reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improve travel time, service reliability, access for the growing population of students, staff, and faculty of Simon Fraser University (SFU) and residents of UniverCity's sustainable community.

For further information regarding this submission, please contact:

Joanne Curry, Vice-President External Relations
Simon Fraser University
joannec@sfu.ca | 778.782.5218

INTRODUCTION

SFU appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance ahead of its 2019 pre-budget consultation.

SFU's vision is to be the leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. Our goals are:

- to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world;
- to be a world leader in knowledge mobilization building on a strong foundation of fundamental research; and
- to be Canada's most community-engaged research university.

Our vision and goals provide the opportunity to contribute in meaningful ways to ensuring Canada's competitiveness and productivity in the face of a changing economic landscape.

In supporting and encouraging Canadians and their businesses to grow the economy, we fully support the recommendations of Universities Canada's submission¹ and its focus on student-oriented and future skills support and research funding.

Building on these recommendations, we suggest four strategic recommendations for the Committee's consideration: 1) support for Indigenous students and businesses, 2) innovation, 3) strategic infrastructure, and 4) sustainable transportation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support for Indigenous Students and Businesses

We fully support Universities Canada's goal to enhance Indigenous student access and success by increasing direct student financial support for Indigenous learners and supporting universities to enhance institutional programs and enable partnerships. Previous investments of federal funding in programs, such as **LE, NONET** at the University of Victoria, greatly enhance student success and connections to community.

A 2016 survey of Aboriginal businesses by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) demonstrated an 15.6% increase in self-employed Aboriginal people—greater than the general population²; and although numerous barriers to growth persist, a June 2017 special report by TD Economics noted Aboriginal businesses are increasingly becoming important and innovative contributors to the Canadian economy³. The CCAB survey also affirmed one of the steps to assist Aboriginal business success is increased support for human resource development and funding skills training⁴.

One such program which highlights the need for this support is SFU's Executive MBA in Indigenous Business and Leadership. In its fifth cohort, the program is the first of its kind in Canada and the only accredited Indigenous MBA program in North America. Learners are mid-career Indigenous professionals who are proven leaders brought together to engage in thoughtful discourse and learning. The program includes the core concepts and knowledge

¹ Universities Canada, *Investing in talent to drive a prosperous, inclusive and innovative Canadian economy*, (Ottawa, 2018)

² Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), *Promise and Prosperity: The 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey*, (Toronto, 2016), page 11

³ TD Economics, *Special Report: Indigenous Business Increasingly Embracing Innovation*, (Toronto, 2017)

⁴ CCAB, page 8

covered in most MBA programs, but also recognizes that traditional knowledge plays a significant role in decision-making for Indigenous communities.

On average, First Nations students make up 80% of all cohorts in the program, while approximately only 50% receive financial support from their Bands. Inuit and Métis students face similar challenges to access funding. Transportation and accommodation costs are contributing factors in a student's decision to enroll in the program; as students travel across Canada to participate in the program, SFU is planning to offer the EMBA in Indigenous Business and Leadership in Toronto in 2019. Federal government support for targeted scholarships would allow more students to access this program.

There is also demand for other executive programs for Indigenous business and government leaders. The SFU Indigenous Business Program recently offered its first pilot in a planned series of Executive Education non-credit professional development programs in the areas of Indigenous governance, economic development, and business that brought together three target groups of Indigenous leaders, middle and senior government officials, and corporate sector professionals.

Finally, there is a recognized scarcity of Indigenous business research and case studies that explore best practices in Indigenous business from a Canadian context. SFU wishes to address this issue by researching and developing case studies to be available to other business schools. Support for Indigenous business research would provide long-term benefits to the continued development of Indigenous innovation and entrepreneurship in Canada.

2. Innovation

SFU endorses Universities Canada's recommendation to renew and enhance the Canada Incubator and Accelerator Program.

Canada's performance in moving technology from academic labs to application continues to lag the performance of other developed countries despite significant public investments in research. To benefit the economy, new approaches are needed to scale experiential learning and enhance the critical skills necessary to move deep technologies more quickly from the lab to application.

SFU has a 30-year history of creating spin-off companies and providing services to business through access to specialized equipment and expert technical staff such as SFU's [4D Labs](#). *SFU Innovates*, a university-wide strategy, was launched in 2015 to build on our dynamic culture and strengthen our commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship, and SFU is the founder of [VentureLabs](#)[®], the leading performing technology business accelerator in British Columbia, recognized in February 2018 as the top North American technology business accelerator by UBI Global.

SFU and other universities have recognized the need and benefit in linking accelerators and incubators across Canada. SFU is also a co-founder of the [Incubate Innovation Network of Canada](#) (I-INC), a pan-Canadian, internationally-connected network of high-performance, university-linked accelerators and incubators established in June 2014. I-INC creates an ecosystem for the efficient commercialization of university-based and science and technology-enabled innovation, especially in moving beyond start-ups to scaled enterprises.

Over the past four years, I-INC has delivered impressive results: supported companies have raised over \$550 million in funding and created more than 3,600 jobs. In all, over 300 companies are supported annually and in the past two years I-INC assisted over 100 companies in their international business development in markets in the U.S., China and Europe, with funding from NRC-IRAP.

Based on its strong performance and the reputation of its founding institutions' programs, I-INC has embarked on an expansion of the network to double the number of Canadian research university members to six across British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. This would increase its reach and impact and provide the scale to deliver the programs that will build a new generation of deep technology-based, globally-competitive businesses.

The expansion will build on the network's already strong performance to:

- increase the regional scope, reach, and impact of the network and its services;
- provide scale-up support to build a new generation of globally-competitive Canadian businesses including access to university-based research and development capacity and programming, talent access, and market validation; and
- offer business development services to Canada's emerging superclusters; and facilitate one-stop access for potential international partners and investors.

Diversity is necessary to increase the participation and grow women-led companies in the economy. With government support, I-INC would introduce new programming and services to support women entrepreneurs in technology companies, accelerate lab-to-market innovation commercialization, and improve access to capital and international market expansion program partnerships.

3. Strategic Infrastructure

The Government of Canada's 2016 Strategic Infrastructure Fund (SIF) was a major catalyst for many institutions across Canada. SFU was awarded \$45 million, which allowed the University to gain matching support from the Government of BC to construct a \$126-million state-of-the-art Sustainable Energy and Environmental Engineering building in Surrey and leverage further funding from the province to launch a Sustainable Energy Engineering undergraduate and graduate program. The program will graduate over 100 new engineers each year to support high demand sectors such as cleantech, renewable energy, smart cities, sustainable manufacturing, clean power generation and utilization, and sustainable food and water solutions. In addition, over 20 new research faculty will be hired to increase Canadian research and innovation capacity in these areas.

We encourage the Federal Government to consider a second targeted SIF. Major infrastructure issues remain at Canadian campuses, and there are still opportunities to boost innovation in Canada by improving the research and development infrastructure, which support existing and future researchers and students and ensure a state-of-the-art research environment.

SFU's top priority is a new Life Sciences Building to house programs that will support new discoveries in areas such as drug development, infection control, and management of our ecosystems. The facility will enable training of highly qualified professionals, support researchers and trainees at the leading edge of their fields, and serve to attract outstanding students, faculty, and industry partners.

4. Sustainable Transportation

SFU's students are among the highest percentage of public transit users in Canada due, in part, to the high number of part-time students accessing our flexible curriculum across three campuses in the lower mainland. SFU is one of the largest employers in the City of Burnaby. Located in Surrey, Burnaby, and Vancouver, SFU's campuses serve 50% of BC's population within an hour commute. The recently confirmed federal and provincial investments in

public transit are welcomed by our students, staff, and faculty who live throughout the region (over 75% of SFU Burnaby students, staff, and faculty commute from outside of the City of Burnaby).

The main Burnaby campus is located on Burnaby Mountain alongside UniverCity—a sustainable community with a current population of 5,000 and expected to grow to over 9,000 residents in several years. The bus route from Production Way—University Skytrain Station up Burnaby Mountain is ranked among the bottom 10% of TransLink-rated routes on several performance measures, and wait times are compounded during times of heavy snow, which can impact classes and operations up to ten days per year.

An updated feasibility study prepared for BC TransLink in April 2018⁵ demonstrates a solid case for an urban gondola (or “Skybus”) that would allow twenty-six buses to be re-deployed throughout the region. A benefit-to-cost ratio of 1.8 was determined for the project before accounting for the full benefits of Greenhouse Gas reductions, air quality improvement, tourism and recreation benefits, and the facilitation of access to the employment hub on Burnaby Mountain. In addition, there is a substantial benefit to providing a second, reliable access route in case of snow storms or emergencies such as fires.

It is our recommendation for the government to invest in this project to ensure that the growing employment and educational hub on Burnaby Mountain is reliably connected to the Metro Vancouver region.

CONCLUSION

SFU is committed to supporting Canada’s competitiveness and productivity in all areas of our mission. We have embraced innovation and collaboration with other public institutions and partners across Canada’s industry sectors, and are confident we are creating and supporting Canada’s future entrepreneurs and innovators. Federal support for the programs identified by Universities Canada and the four priority areas outlined in this submission would be another strategic investment in ensuring Canada’s competitiveness and long-term productivity.

We thank the Committee for its consideration.

Word Count: 1,980

⁵ CH2M Hill Canada Limited, *Burnaby Mountain Gondola Transit—Feasibility Study*, Burnaby 2018.