

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

By: Concordia University of Edmonton

Concordia University of Edmonton (“CUE”) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the development of Budget 2020 and thanks the Committee for its work on pre-budget consultations. In addition to this submission, CUE supports the submission presented by Universities Canada, our national association, which highlights the critical role that universities play in strengthening local economies and providing solutions to climate change and the most pressing global challenges.

Recommendation 1:

Expand investments in international research collaboration to ensure Canada and CUE can fully participate in world-leading, interdisciplinary, international research to address climate change and other pressing global issues.

Recommendation 2:

Invest in a new knowledge mobilization fund to increase the impact of CUE’s research in driving Canada’s economic, climate, and social priorities.

About Concordia

Concordia University of Edmonton (“CUE”) is Canada’s pre-eminent small university. A boutique institution, CUE is small enough that every student is essential yet large enough for a global outlook, with a unique culture that values collaboration across disciplines and interests to solve major problems. With a growing enrolment of over 3000 students, CUE has a clear path forward and enormous ambition.

Canada’s universities, including CUE, are centres of research and innovation, developing highly qualified researchers and leaders who will ensure that Canada thrives in a knowledge-based economy increasingly disrupted by technology and global competition. At the same time, we are adopting new technologies, building and refurbishing research infrastructure, and reducing our carbon footprint.

Concordia University of Edmonton's Budget Priorities

CUE welcomes the Standing Committee on Finance's pre-budget consultations and looks forward to working with all Parliamentarians to address global climate change and transition to a low carbon economy. Specifically, CUE prioritizes investment in international research collaboration and knowledge transfer, as expanded upon below.

Investing in international research collaboration

International research collaboration provides solutions to global challenges: knowledge and ideas are exchanged, and access to state-of-the-art research infrastructure is expanded as international networks grow. If Canada is serious about mitigating global climate change, we cannot afford to be on the sidelines of large-scale international research collaboration.

For decades, Canada's world-class university researchers have studied our changing climate and developed solutions to pressing economic and social challenges. With increased research collaboration, we can elevate the global impact of these Canadian solutions.

However, funding for international research collaboration is inadequate, diffuse, and complex, leaving CUE at a disadvantage when it comes to participation in global initiatives. We recommend expanding investments in international research collaboration to ensure that Canada can fully participate in the world-leading, interdisciplinary, international research being conducted to develop solutions to climate change and other pressing global issues.

This investment would have a meaningful impact on CUE through direct support of our ongoing research projects. For example, CUE has earth and environmental sciences and a particular strength of applied research – solving real problems. This is helpful in working towards systemic, cumulative global environmental change. CUE also has a history of internationally co-authored research, but requires additional funding for further collaboration.

Investing in transferring research knowledge

Each day universities collaborate with industry, health care institutions, and community-based organizations to bring research solutions to Canadians. In the face of climate change – an issue that touches every facet of Canadian society – we must invest strategically to ensure that new research and knowledge is leveraged to speed our transition to a low carbon economy.

Solutions relating to multiple dimensions of climate change are being generated by researchers across disciplines at Canada's universities, but in order for Canadians to benefit we need to support collaboration with businesses and social innovators.

We recommend investments in a new knowledge mobilization fund to support:

- Innovation hubs that bring university researchers together with industry and/or community representatives to identify and develop research initiatives that have high commercial potential and/or social benefit.
- Accessible, shared university facilities and resources to support industry R&D 1 Universities Canada's calculations based on annual AUTM Licensing Activity Survey data.
- Lab-to-market programming that gives faculty and graduate student researchers the knowledge and tools to turn research discoveries into commercially viable and/or socially beneficial innovations.
- Business incubators and accelerators that leverage universities' research and programming strengths and their national and international relationships to support scalable business development.
- Programs to fund patenting and prototyping of innovations with high commercial and/or social value.
- Multi-faceted institutional research and innovation partnerships with long-term commercial and/or social potential.

This will make better use of publicly funded research done at CUE, assist with the mobility of CUE researchers between academia and industry, and with student placements in industry, plus CUE experts can be utilized as consultants or collaborative researchers or contract researchers with industry.

Conclusion

As outlined, these strategic investments in Canada's post-secondary framework would meaningfully impact CUE in addition to improving the overall PSE landscape. By investing in post-secondary education, Canada can ensure that our country is well equipped to assist in global issues, such as climate change, as well as provide first class education. Thank you for reading the Concordia University of Edmonton's budget submission.

For more information on CUE's priorities please do not hesitate to reach out to Concordia University of Edmonton's President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Tim Loreman, by phone at 780 479 9356 or email at president@concordia.ab.ca.