

2021 Pre-Budget Consultation

The University of British Columbia's submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

August 7, 2020



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Recommendations

Building a More Adaptable, Resilient Workforce

1. Expand opportunities for reskilling and retraining

Increase the Canada Training Benefit to support continuous learning, and support for post-secondary institutions to provide new, innovative academic offerings.

2. Enhance access to graduate education

Triple the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships available for master's students and double the number available for PhD students.

3. Position Canada as a destination of choice for international talent

Continue promoting Canada as a destination for international students and support post-secondary institutions to welcome them safely.

Fostering Growth through Research and Innovation

4. Invest in a National Quantum Strategy

Establish a funded, coordinated National Quantum Strategy to capitalize on Canada's global leadership position in quantum technologies.

5. Strengthen high-growth technology sectors

Invest in strategic, emerging, high-potential sectors of the economy to drive innovation.

6. Invest in research for an innovation- and knowledge-driven economy

Support fundamental research by significantly increasing investments in Canada's Tri-Councils over the next four years.

Forward-Thinking Investments in Infrastructure

7. Continue the Broadway Subway to UBC

Partner with three First Nations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of BC and UBC to fund the business case for extending rapid transit to UBC.

8. Support digital infrastructure for inclusive growth

Accelerate investments to provide every Canadian with access to reliable, high-speed internet.

9. Infrastructure for a greener future

Create a \$2-billion Green Campus Infrastructure Fund to support projects that increase energy efficiency and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused heartbreaking loss of life, and widespread economic and social hardship. Throughout these unprecedented challenges, Canada has managed the COVID-19 pandemic with a bold, evidence-based approach that has positioned the country well for recovery. UBC commends the federal government's focus on supporting the most vulnerable Canadians, including a \$9 billion emergency aid package for students, and efforts to bolster post-secondary research and support researchers.

Canada is at a pivotal moment as parliamentarians and government formulate what shape our recovery will take. Canada can lead the world in the recovery while pursuing opportunities to help those most impacted by the economic downturn while building a resilient, inclusive, sustainable and globally competitive economy. Seizing these opportunities will require dynamic and innovative public policy that supports the development of a highly skilled and adaptable labour force, forward-looking investments and long-term strategies that support the growth of emerging economic sectors in which Canada can lead globally.

Canada's post-secondary institutions are critical to achieving these objectives and the recommendations in this document set out ways in which governments and post-secondary institutions can together build a strong recovery.

Building a More Adaptable, Resilient Workforce

The economic and labour market shocks delivered by the pandemic, in conjunction with pre-existing trends toward a more volatile and competency-driven labour market, are likely to result in a large number of Canadians seeking further education, upskilling and/or retraining. Enabling Canadians to access these opportunities will be critical to Canada's short-term economic recovery, and to building a more highly-skilled, adaptable and globally competitive workforce.

The pandemic has exacerbated long-standing systemic issues of inequality in Canadian society, with job losses disproportionately affecting women, young people and marginalized groups. Canada's recovery must ensure that prosperity is shared equitably and that the rights of Indigenous peoples across Canada are upheld. In considering the recommendations below, we encourage government to enhance targeted supports for Indigenous students and students from marginalized groups.

Recommendation 1: Expand opportunities for reskilling and retraining

Responding to Canadians' reskilling needs, both pre-existing and those worsened by the pandemic, will require new program designs and delivery mechanisms, such as micro-credentials and other forms of stackable or ladder credentials, and high-quality online and blended learning.

The federal government recognized the importance of continuous learning in Budget 2019 by creating the Canada Training Benefit. **We recommend government enhance supports for Canadians pursuing training by increasing the annual training credit and allowing this credit to cover a higher portion of tuition.**

We encourage government to support post-secondary institutions to meet the anticipated demand for reskilling by investing in the infrastructure required to facilitate online models of education including digital infrastructure and cyber security.

Recommendation 2: Enhance access to graduate education

Graduate education is essential to Canada's competitiveness, nurturing innovation and growth across sectors and fostering solutions to society's pressing challenges. Employers consistently rank graduate competencies as among the most sought-after, and advanced degree-holders consistently show the strongest labour market outcomes of any educational group. However, Canada continues to remain well behind other advanced knowledge economies in graduate degree attainment (25th of 36 OECD countries). Enabling more Canadians to pursue graduate education is essential to Canada's economic and social prosperity.

UBC recommends government improve access to graduate education by tripling the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships available for master's students and doubling the number available for PhD students. We also encourage government to further open eligibility for international students – with more competitive incentives, Canada is well-positioned to attract top international graduate student talent who contribute to Canada's research enterprise and skilled workforce.

Recommendation 3: Position Canada as a destination of choice for international students

Post-secondary institutions play a central role in attracting global talent to Canada. Although migration to Canada has been curtailed, the international education market remains highly competitive, and Canada must ensure it maintains its position as a top destination. International students in Canada support research and innovation, build diverse campus communities, represent a key source of talent in our economy, and create links between Canada and countries around the world. International students directly contribute an estimated \$21.6 billion to the Canadian economy (including \$6 billion in tuition) and sustain close to 170,000 jobs.

We encourage government to maintain the momentum of the International Education Strategy announced in Budget 2019, to invest in facilitating the entry of international students, ensure immigration policies reflect this priority and support institutions to safely welcome students.

Fostering Growth through Research and Innovation

Government and industry investments in research have created a globally competitive research and development ecosystem that contributes to Canada's growth and prosperity. As recognized in Budget 2018, "Research expands our basic understanding of the world, generates new ideas, leads to new jobs for our children and grandchildren when they grow up, and helps build a workforce that is better able to respond to challenges with creativity and confidence."

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the importance of research and innovation. Canada's success in combatting COVID-19 has been built on decades of scientific inquiry and on the ability to rapidly mobilize our existing research and development capacity. It has enabled Canada to develop effective public health strategies, promising new treatments and vaccines, locally-sourced protective equipment, and solutions to the pandemic's social and economic consequences.

It is equally important to bring this perspective to Canada's recovery, recognizing that Canada's future prosperity will largely rely on providing our people and institutions with the resources to continue building and applying new knowledge and technologies.

Recommendation 4: Invest in a National Quantum Strategy

A consortium of Canadian quantum companies and research institutions have developed a proposal for a National Quantum Strategy. The strategy builds on Canada's early global lead in quantum science and technologies and aims to further accelerate Canada's development of quantum technologies to own a significant share of the fundamental intellectual property upon which the quantum revolution will be based. **We recommend establishing a funded, coordinated National Quantum Strategy that will bolster all parts of the quantum ecosystem – from mobilizing research into commercial applications, to training a highly-skilled workforce that develops and works with these powerful new technologies.**

Recommendation 5: Strengthen high-growth technology sectors

Building a more innovative, inclusive and low-carbon economy with strong long-term growth will require Canada to lead in new and emerging sectors. The recovery period is an opportune time to make forward-thinking investments in the next wave of high-growth, disruptive technologies and sectors. **UBC echoes the U15's recommendation calling for targeted investments to secure Canadian leadership in high-potential sectors where Canada has world-leading R&D and strong commercial opportunity.**

Recommendation 6: Invest in research for an innovation- and knowledge-driven economy

Research conducted at Canadian post-secondary institutions is critical to building an innovation-driven economy. Investments in research are fundamentally investments in people: if Canada wants to lead the world in discovery and innovation, we must significantly expand and deepen our talent pool. **To ensure a robust and diverse research enterprise in Canada, we encourage government to make investments in Canada's Tri-Councils that bring research funding to globally competitive levels.** The granting councils support the work of Canada's leading researchers while training the next generation of researchers and innovators.

Forward-Thinking Investments in Infrastructure

Accelerated investment in infrastructure is an important measure to stimulate economic growth and advance social and economic goals. However, the current economic context requires a strategy that goes beyond traditional infrastructure to include investments that enable digital connectivity, sustainability and economic inclusion.

Recommendation 7: Continue the Broadway Subway to UBC

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the demand on Metro Vancouver roadways and transit systems will continue to grow. Staying committed to expanding transit infrastructure will help Canada meet the foundational, long-term needs of its communities.

Continuing the Millennium Line SkyTrain extension to UBC, beyond the currently planned terminus at Arbutus Street, is part of the regional transportation strategy and will bring numerous benefits. These include:

- creating an estimated 13,000 person-years of new employment over the next eight to 10 years, many starting as early as next year;
- greatly increasing affordable housing options across the length of the line, including at UBC where, with a viable transit connection, the residential population could exceed 50,000 people by 2050;
- advancing reconciliation by partnering with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations as they work toward a progressive and sustainable new neighbourhood on the 90-acre Jericho Lands, which the proposed extension would serve;
- enhancing access to education and critical services at UBC, while expanding UBC's regional presence;
- enabling more economic output from the Broadway Corridor;
- reducing congestion, greenhouse gasses and pollution; and
- enabling the exchange of ideas and knowledge transfer to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and new discoveries.

TransLink will be ready in early 2021 to start the next planning phase for this project, subject to securing business case funding estimated to be \$50 million. Without senior government funding in place, the project will not progress and risks being significantly delayed.

We recommend that government partner with the Province of BC, UBC, the City of Vancouver and the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to fund the business case, ensuring planning continues without delay and enabling construction to commence by 2023.

Recommendation 8: Support digital infrastructure for inclusive growth

Digital infrastructure is essential to Canada's future, particularly as we can expect more online work as part of a "new normal", including a significant increase in online learning delivered by post-secondary institutions. Enhancing Canadian people and firms' ability to work virtually will result in a larger network of possible partners, clients, and access to talent and work opportunities across the country.

For people studying or working remotely – particularly those in rural and remote communities - limited access to internet or poor connectivity poses a great challenge and perpetuates inequities. To ensure equitable access to remote learning and work, **UBC recommends government accelerate investments toward providing every Canadian with the ability to access to reliable, high-speed internet.**

Recommendation 9: Infrastructure for a Greener Future

The world continues to face a climate emergency. Addressing climate change will necessitate understanding and rethinking humanity's relationship with the planet, requiring new ideas, policies, and technologies that rapidly enable a low-carbon society and help us adapt to an uncertain future. Investments in greener buildings and public transportation infrastructure are proven methods of creating jobs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We encourage government to adopt Universities Canada and U15's Green Campus Infrastructure proposal – a \$2-billion fund to support projects that increase the efficiency of university campuses and decrease their carbon footprint.