



Submission to the House of
Commons Standing Committee on Finance

By: Ontario Tech University

Ontario Tech University supports many of the recommendations for ensuring a sustainable economic recovery post-COVID-19 put forward by Universities Canada:

Recommendation 1

Ensure international students can continue to study in Canada by:

- Recognizing the \$21.6 billion dollar impact of international students in Canada, strengthening coordination across departments and investing in processes to safely and efficiently welcome international students to Canada;
- Offsetting international student losses with a dedicated federal transfer to universities to compensate for a decline in international student enrolment; and,
- Investing in branding, recruitment and visa processing to support recovery and diversification efforts.

Recommendation 2

Invest in access, upskilling, and reskilling by:

- Creating non-taxable training vouchers for workers displaced by the economic impacts of the pandemic that can be used for immediate short-cycle PSE training;
- Implementing enhanced flexibility and funding for the Canada Training Benefit, so the program becomes a training allowance responsive to upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning needs of Canadians;
- Providing funding for institutions to develop accessible short courses in key demand areas; and,
- Extending changes made to the Canada Student Loan Program through the end of 2021.

Recommendation 3

Invest in green, digital, and accessible university infrastructure as part of the federal government's COVID-19 recovery plan. To ensure that funds flow quickly, we recommend the federal government leverage the successful previous post-secondary infrastructure programs.

Recommendation 4

Invest in research and innovation to solve challenges that matter to Canadians, and ensure Canada's social and economic recovery by:

- Making significant investments in fundamental research to ensure a robust and diverse corps of researchers solving the challenges that matter to Canadians;
- Opening up eligibility to leadership by universities in flagship innovation programs such as the Strategic Innovation Fund, Stream 4 & 5: *R&D collaborations and networks*, as well as other future R&D Initiatives with industry and community;
- 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;
- Investing in a new higher education knowledge mobilization fund to leverage the ideas and intellectual property generated by universities for economic recovery and community growth; and,
- Ramping up the Lab2Market pilot nationally and providing stable, centralized funding to support its growth.

Introduction

Since early this year, Ontario Tech University has played an essential role in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. We are conducting critical research and development to supply PPE, inventing new sterilization techniques, repurposing facilities to assist front-line workers and working with communities and businesses to address the pandemic's social and economic impacts. We moved 10 000 learners online in one day and are investing to ensure that this fall all students have access to a safe, high-quality learning environment, regardless of how classes are delivered.

As Canada moves toward recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario Tech will help accelerate the country's ability to rebuild the economy. We will ensure quality education for domestic and international students, upskill and reskill those displaced from the workforce and will drive the research and innovation we need for Canada's economic and social recovery. Ontario Tech can be a key resource to government, business, and local communities as well.

In addition to the recommendations below, Ontario Tech has several shovel ready projects which will support Canada's economic recovery in the near term through their construction. In the long-term, these projects will ensure our graduates and research programs support Canada's economic prosperity and competitiveness.

We also have a project under review with FedDev Ontario which has the potential to kick-start the quantum ecosystem in Durham Region, Northumberland County and Southern Ontario. This project is in collaboration with IBM Canada and involves locating a Quantum Hub on our Oshawa campus. This Quantum Hub will transform the regional innovation ecosystem and develop novel Intellectual Property in the form of commercial use cases for quantum computing. This project is also a very complementary addition to previous quantum investments made by the Government of Canada.

Growing Canada's talent pipeline by attracting international students

International students bring new perspectives, ideas, and valuable networks to Canada, both in the classrooms and local communities. They also contribute to local and Canadian economies during their studies and once they enter the job market. Despite our best efforts to welcome international students to our institution, closed borders, and global travel restrictions have greatly impacted our ability to secure students. The financial impact resulting from the loss of international students due to COVID-19 is significant. To ensure the stability of the post-secondary education sector, universities seek a federal back-stop to offset lost revenue.

Participating in and rebuilding Canada's talent through learning, upskilling, and reskilling

In 2019, the government established the Future Skills Council, recognizing the need to invest in skills training in the face of technological advances, shifting business models, and the transition to a low carbon economy. As universities are on the front lines of equipping the Canadian workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in the new economy, over the course of the pandemic Ontario Tech has undergone a massive shift in program delivery. For example, we are working with [eCampusOntario](#) to create quality online content for students. Additionally, our [Continuous Learning](#) department has shifted all of its content online.

Our Continuous Learning department builds and houses certificate programs and learning opportunities that support lifelong learning and professional development. The rapid expansion of online courses presents a unique opportunity to offer flexible programs and degrees to Canadians, particularly those

who are temporarily or permanently unemployed as a result of COVID-19. Those impacted are more likely to be female, from racialized groups, or Canadians with disabilities. Ensuring that these workers are able to access skills training and return to work as quickly as possible will not only help the country recover economically but will also prevent employment-based equity gaps from growing as a result of COVID-19.

Investing in green, digital, and accessible infrastructure

Due to COVID-19, there was a massive shift to delivering online content for students. Therefore, the need for digital infrastructure as classes and programs transition online is crucial. Investments in digital infrastructure will rapidly expand access to post-secondary education and upskilling and reskilling as the country re-opens. These investments will also ensure that students can attend regardless of disability, physical distancing, work, or family requirements. This investment will support the government's work to create a more accessible Canada via the Accessible Canada Act, implemented in 2019.

Ontario Tech is focused on physical infrastructure as the pandemic restrictions begin to lift. In 2015, \$26.9 million in federal funding was announced for the support of the Centre for Advanced Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (CARIE). This infrastructure investment, now referred to as the University Centre, creates a space where industry, government, and community partners can access the university's academic expertise and use its state-of-the-art facilities. This facility allows for collaborative research by faculty members and their students to tackle complex industrial and societal challenges and develop solutions to real-world problems. This will enable the university to support and expand capacity for research, industry partnerships, technology transfer, community outreach, student engagement and contribute to Canada's economic prosperity. We ask that the Government of Canada resume discussions with Ontario to make available a portion of the \$26.9M to assist Ontario Tech with our current capital expansion. This project will help us better serve our domestic and international students, support industry partnerships and contribute to Canada's economy.

Accelerating recovery through research, innovation, and knowledge mobilization

COVID-19 has made it abundantly clear that investment in research matters. Ontario Tech has partnered with local business, e.g. Ontario Power Generation, to develop new forms of personal protective equipment. We also have 3D printed ventilators and produced a ventilator connector component for a local health care network, Lakeridge Health. We are also developing home testing kits for COVID-19 and undertaking an exciting project for early detection of pandemics through municipal wastewater testing, modelling and monitoring.

These kinds of initiatives create training and career opportunities for undergrad and graduate students and researchers. They also provide economic stimulus as new products and services are developed and brought to markets. Most importantly, they build our made-in-Canada capacity to manage future pandemics and keep Canadians healthy.

Conclusion

As the economy restarts, Ontario Tech emphasizes the importance of an inclusive recovery, keeping with our long-standing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as reconciliation. New investments in education, infrastructure, skills, and training have the potential to close the economic and equity gaps that have been exacerbated by COVID-19. Ontario Tech is proud to continue to play a key role in the recovery of Durham Region, Northumberland County as well as Ontario and Canada.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments for your consideration in developing the 2021 budget.

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