

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

The University of Winnipeg

Recommendation 1:

Support international students studying in Canada by increasing visa-processing capacity, funding the safe arrival and quarantine of international students, backstopping international tuition revenue losses, and investing in regaining and diversifying markets through branding, recruitment and visa processing.

Recommendation 2:

Invest in access to education, upskilling and reskilling by creating non-taxable training vouchers for pandemic-displaced workers, enhancing the flexibility and funding for the Canada Training Benefit for Canadians' ongoing learning, funding the development of short courses in key demand areas, and extending the changes made to the Canada Student Loan Program to the end of 2021.

Recommendation 3:

Invest in green, digital, and accessible university infrastructure to help rebuild and refurbish campuses to be safe, digitally enabled and more environmentally sustainable.

Recommendation 4:

Invest in research and innovation to solve challenges that matter to Canadians, and harness the current awareness of the importance of research to solve challenges that matter to Canadians to advance a strong argument for investments in research and innovation as critical to Canada's economic recovery.

About UWinnipeg

The University of Winnipeg is located in the heart of downtown Winnipeg, adjacent to one of the poorest and most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Canada, which includes a large population of Indigenous people. We are a medium-sized university with approximately 10,000 graduate and undergraduate students, and an additional 4,000 adult learners who are currently enrolled in our Professional, Applied and Continuing Education programs.

Our 350 tenured faculty members in six faculties, including Arts, Science, Business, Education, Kinesiology and Graduate Studies, conduct a broad range of research activities, with a special emphasis on partnerships and research impact, locally and globally.

UWinnipeg is a member of Universities Canada and fully supports its budget submission to the Standing Committee on Finance. We offer this submission as a complement to the Universities Canada submission, as a means of providing some additional context and depth as it relates to the need for the Government of Canada to lead the nation in the recovery by supporting international students, responding to increased demand for upskilling and reskilling, and investing in green infrastructure and university research.

Supporting International Students

International students are an integral part of Canadian universities, bringing fresh perspectives and networks. Many choose to stay in Canada after graduation, enriching our communities and supporting the Canadian economy. Measures put in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic have complicated travel and could result in substantially fewer international students in the coming year. Canada can address this situation by increasing visa processing capacity and investing in a quarantine fund to help keep international students safe and ensure their continued academic success.

International students also contribute a substantial portion of Canadian universities' revenue. The federal government can help preserve the financial integrity of universities by backstopping tuition losses caused by the pandemic.

More than 1,200 international students from over 80 countries around the world called UWinnipeg home in 2019. That is more than 12% of our total student population and twice the number of international students who attended UWinnipeg in 2015.

Responding to the Demand for Reskilling and Upskilling

Economic downturns present many challenges to individuals and businesses as they adapt to the realities of the pandemic. Workers are taking the opportunity for reskilling and upskilling. The COVID-19 pandemic struck Canada shortly before registration opened for the spring term. UWinnipeg experienced a 30 per cent increase in spring term registrations. We met this demand with a substantial increase in online course offerings. Our staff and faculty responded admirably and delivered instruction to our student body.

In recent years, the Business-Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) has worked to understand what skills workers will need in the future. The pandemic has revealed that the transformation of the job market

has sped up dramatically. Canada has an opportunity to reimagine teaching and learning. We ask the federal government to invest in new technology for faculty and staff at Canadian universities.

Investing in Green, Digital & Accessible Infrastructure

Across the country, Canadian universities have deferred maintenance. Much needs to be done to modernize infrastructure and build in climate resiliency and reduce the carbon footprint of university facilities. With the arrival of the pandemic, universities made a dramatic pivot in March to remote course delivery. This underscores the critical role of digital infrastructure in the resiliency of the Canadian post-secondary sector and in terms of accessibility for students. Until a vaccine is available, universities and students will heavily rely on digital infrastructure.

UWinnipeg has developed new shovel ready projects that support academic excellence, climate change resiliency, lowered carbon emissions, and social equity. The redevelopment of the UWinnipeg library and the replacement of the aging heating system with a new geothermal field are two of our key priorities. The new mechanical system will cut emissions in half. We ask that Canada's budget supports investments in physical infrastructure that create jobs and stimulate the economy.

UWinnipeg has a long history of integrating sustainable practices and principles. We take our responsibility to the people and land in our neighbourhood seriously. About two thirds of UWinnipeg's newly constructed or renovated building space is certified under a green building rating system. UWinnipeg's Richardson College for the Environment and the Axworthy Health and RecPlex, totaling over 31,000 square feet, are LEED Gold certified. McFeetors Hall, a student residence, and the Buhler Centre, the home to UWinnipeg's Faculty of Business and Economics, are LEED Silver certified. All new building proposals are assessed in terms of the impact of the project on UWinnipeg's sustainability goals. In 2019, UWinnipeg installed one of Winnipeg's largest solar panel systems. This 540-panel installation will produce up to 180,000 kWh of electricity per year. This is roughly the amount of energy required to power sixteen Canadian homes.

The UWCRC is a separate, non-profit community partnership organization that offers a full range of values-driven development services to organizations. UWCRC's services include feasibility assessments, project management, land assembly, First Nations economic development consulting, and property management. Many public and private financing and funding sources are used to develop environmentally, socially, economically, and culturally sustainable projects.

According to Edward Jackson's report for the J.W. McConnell Foundation, UWCRC is a viable business model with "solid performance for a non-profit organization." UWCRC has designed and built sustainable buildings worth more than \$200 million over the past decade. Jackson notes that these publicly funded infrastructure projects have directly and indirectly contributed more than \$320 million to the economy. UWCRC's environmental sustainability gains have been important to UWinnipeg "achieving its Kyoto 2012 and 2016 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets."

Research & Innovation to Accelerate the Recovery

COVID-19 highlighted the importance of research in the minds of Canadians across the country. When faced with the challenge of this virus, researchers applied their expertise to the mission of keeping

Canadians safe. Investing in Canadian research and innovation will keep our country on the road to recovery as we address our economic, climate and social priorities.

We recommend that the federal government invest in knowledge mobilization. Incubators that bring together academic researchers, industry, specialists, and students create opportunities to develop innovative products for the market and for Canadians' wellbeing.

UWinnipeg's researchers are conducting science-based research that has local, national, and global impact. Dr. Nora Casson is investigating the effects of climate change on nutrient cycling in Canada's boreal watersheds. Dr. Darshani Kumaragamage is researching ways farmers can reduce phosphorus runoff during the spring snowmelt. She is also looking at certain soil amendments, and if they could reduce the amount of phosphorus that flows into flood water. Dr. Blair Jamieson has received the Subatomic Physics Major Resource Support grant to support detector mechanics and electronics for subatomic physics experiments.

At UWinnipeg, 42 faculty and staff members are engaged in sustainability research. One of these is Canada Research Chair Dr. Ryan Bullock, director of the Centre for Forest Interdisciplinary Research (C-FIR). Since 1998, C-FIR's researchers have studied a wide range of ecological, economic, and socio-cultural issues that shape forests and the natural resources provided by forest systems in Manitoba and around the world. Dr. Bullock is conducting community-based research in an effort to advance Indigenous community and forest land sustainability.

Conclusion

UWinnipeg and other Canadian universities are already supporting Canada's economic recovery and we are ready to do more. In partnership with governments, communities, and industry, we can lay a foundation for the continued prosperity of Canada.