

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the  
2022 Federal Budget**



## Recommendations

Dalhousie University recommends the Government of Canada:

### **Recommendation 1: Attract the best and brightest to study and stay in Canada**

- Set a goal of making Canada *the* first-choice destination for international students by adopting immigration policies that ensure we remain competitive.

### **Recommendation 2: Support graduate and post-graduate educational attainment**

- Improve access to graduate education by increasing the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships.

### **Recommendation 3: Invest in Canada's research ecosystem to support researchers at all stages of their career**

- Systematic, sustained increases in research funding with a goal of achieving 2.5% of GDP invested in research within 5 years.

### **Recommendation 4: work with post-secondary institutions to develop broader skills development strategies that support tomorrow's workforce**

- Engage universities, particularly those with faculties of continuing education, on the development of broader skills strategies outside the traditional degree delivery framework.

### **Recommendation 5: Invest in research commercialization efforts in strategic areas where Canada has real strengths**

- Support commercialization in key growth sectors such as cleantech, advanced manufacturing, agri-food, alternative energy and biotech.

## **Introduction**

Dalhousie University thanks the Government of Canada for its ongoing support during COVID-19. The Government's collaborative and supportive response to the pandemic had a significant impact on our students, faculty, researchers, staff and community. In particular, federal support for students and researchers went a long way to reducing anxiety and supporting ongoing educational attainment and research productivity during this tumultuous period.

Enhancements to the Canada Student Loans program helped reduce barriers to access for students during the height of the pandemic. This, coupled with the Canada Emergency Student Benefit and broadened supports for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) – such as through expanded Student Work Placement Program (SWPP) eligibility – acknowledged the myriad ways in which student access and experience were affected throughout the pandemic and provided essential supports that kept students learning and working. At Dalhousie, we acknowledge the direct impact of these government supports to our steady enrolment during the 2020-21 academic year and, as of this submission, our anticipated increased enrolment for the 2021-22 year. Educational attainment is the cornerstone of a modern economy and we acknowledge the Government's leadership in this space.

We appreciate the Government's collaborative approach regarding international students. While this community has faced particular challenges throughout the pandemic, we are thankful that the Canadian government worked with the post-secondary sector to ensure that students could continue their studies online without losing eligibility for post-graduate work permits. As we look toward the recovery period and increased mobility, we are thankful for the foundation of compassion and collaboration that has defined Canada's approach to date.

Dalhousie would also like to thank the Government for its ongoing commitment to research. The Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund ensured the maintenance of research teams and enabled rapid resumption of research activities affected by the pandemic. This and other support mechanisms enabled researchers at all stages of the research process – from basic discovery to applied to community driven – to play a key role in Canada and the world's ability to understand and respond to all facets of the pandemic. Ongoing support of post-secondary research through the tri-agencies will continue to be important as we contemplate economic recovery and longer-term pandemic impacts.

Canada is at a pivotal moment. As we move closer to reaching vaccination targets and contemplate a post-COVID reality, we have an opportunity to build an inclusive, resilient, sustainable and globally competitive economy. Through thoughtful investments in people and the strategies to support their success, Canada can emerge from the pandemic with world leading capabilities and opportunities.

## Investing in People to Build a Workforce for Tomorrow's Economy

### Recommendation 1: Attract the best and brightest to study and stay in Canada

Canada's ability to meet the workforce needs of the future is dependent in no small part on our ability to attract and retain immigrants. At Dalhousie, our international student population has increased by more than 50% since 2015. With Canadian credentials and immersion in Canadian culture, international students are an increasingly important stream of skilled immigrants. Recognizing both Nova Scotia and Canada's goals around population growth and the central role immigration will play in this, Dalhousie's strategic plan includes growing the percentage of international students in our student body from 22% to 33%.

Dalhousie supports the U15 and Universities Canada's recommendations on international student recruitment and encourages the Government to **set a goal of making Canada the first-choice destination for international students**. As global competition for talent heats up, Canada can capitalize on its welcoming national brand by adopting immigration policies that remain competitive and view international students as prospective Canadians from the day they apply for a student visa.

### Recommendation 2: Support graduate and post-graduate educational attainment

Graduate education is essential not only to the long-term health of Canadian academia but to Canada's competitiveness in emerging and growing industries in the knowledge economy. Canada continues to rank well behind other OECD countries in graduate degree attainment (28<sup>th</sup>). Ensuring graduate and post-graduate education is accessible for Canadians is critical to developing a highly skilled workforce. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, accessible graduate education is also a key tool that can help prevent generational scarring amongst young Canadians particularly impacted by economic instability. Broadening the accessibility of graduate education can help ensure young Canadians have options as they navigate a tumultuous economy and plan their next steps.

Dalhousie recommends that the federal government **improve access to graduate education by increasing the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships available for master's and PhD students**.

### Recommendation 3: Invest in Canada's research ecosystem to support researchers at all stages of their career

Research and researchers played a crucial role in Canada's ability to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Years of discovery research led to the development of the mRNA vaccines, while collaboration amongst researchers and industry led to the development and implementation of a significantly shortened clinical trial process that allowed a vaccine to be market-ready in record time. Rapid COVID testing, wastewater testing and new ways of developing PPE were made possible due to years of government investments in discovery research and the ability of researchers to pivot their work to

address this critical and time-sensitive global issue. These achievements speak to the importance of a robust research ecosystem to future-proofing Canada's ability to respond to crises.

To ensure Canada emerges from the pandemic able to compete in a world marked by an increasing race for top talent and rapidly expanding R&D intensity, Dalhousie supports the U15's call to **set a benchmark of achieving 2.5% of GDP invested in research within 5 years**. A sustained, systematic increase in research funding across the research ecosystem is the most effective means of investing in researchers at all stages of their careers and positioning Canada to respond to future challenges.

## **Strengthen Enabling Conditions that Support the Economy of Tomorrow**

### **Recommendation 4: Work with post-secondary institutions to develop broader skills development strategies that support tomorrow's workforce**

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated economic transformation. With a large percentage of the workforce working remotely, the last 18 months has seen rapid adoption of digital technologies and the creation and expansion of fast-growing sectors. Budget 2021's historic investments in skills go a long way to creating conditions that will support the Canadian workforce in meeting the needs of our rapidly changing economy.

While responding to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, employers, workers and educational institutions are also navigating the accelerating digitization of the economy and its current and future impacts. As we look toward a future where resiliency and adaptability are increasingly fundamental requirements for success, Dalhousie calls upon the federal government to continue to **engage universities, particularly those with faculties of continuing education, on the development of broader skills strategies outside the traditional degree delivery framework**.

### **Recommendation 5: Invest in research commercialization efforts in strategic areas where Canada has real strengths**

Investments in skills need to be coupled with sustained efforts to stay at the forefront of digital and technological change. Clean tech, advanced manufacturing, agri-food, and biotech are forecast to be among Canada's fastest growing sectors, both in terms of employment and economic growth. Canada's ability to lead in these sectors of the knowledge economy depends on our ability to stay at the forefront of emerging technologies and to strengthen the relationships between research and industry.

**Strategic investments at the nexus of research and commercial enterprise** can fuel Canada's leadership. Ensuring that researchers working on highly marketable emerging technologies – such as the battery storage and precision agriculture work being done at Dalhousie – have access to funding and commercialization supports is essential.

## Conclusion

Throughout the pandemic, Canada and Canadians have demonstrated the resiliency, adaptability and perseverance that will be increasingly needed to stay competitive in a rapidly changing economy. With strategic government interventions at key pressure points, the Canadian workforce and economy can capitalize on learnings from the last year and a half and use them to propel our economic recovery. One key takeaway from this period should be the growth potential of regions outside Canada's largest cities.

Increasing digitization creates greater opportunity to grow regions across the country. With a strong record in pandemic management, a growing capital city – currently ranked by Maclean's Magazine as Canada's best place to live and work remotely in 2021 – and a robust and engaged post-secondary system contributing to dynamic parts of the economy, Nova Scotia has high growth potential and is well positioned to support Canada's inclusive economic recovery. Whether its attracting international students and supporting them in their journey to become Canadians, providing opportunities for graduate study, supporting the development of non-traditional training programs or supporting researchers and industry to commercialize promising concepts, Dalhousie is ready to build back better and to optimize opportunities to support Nova Scotia and Canada through the economic recovery.

Dalhousie thanks the Government of Canada for the opportunity to make a submission to the budget consultation process.