



May 17, 2023

Standing Committee on Science and Research
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Canada
SRSR@parl.gc.ca

Re: Government of Canada's Graduate Scholarship and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs

Dear Members of the Committee,

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (the Federation) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee on Science and Research study on the Government of Canada's Graduate Scholarship and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs.

As the national voice for the humanities and social sciences, we represent a diverse community of 91,000 researchers and graduate students across Canada. Our researchers have a vital role to play in addressing major challenges facing Canada and the world – including climate change, racial injustice, the rapid advances of AI, and the spread of infectious diseases. Canada's next generation of researchers, however, is struggling to make ends meet. Living costs are fast outpacing the value of federally-funded graduate student scholarships and post-doctoral fellowships. New federal investments are urgently needed to support Canada's research talent across all disciplines.

Recommendation: Invest in Canada's future researchers by increasing the amount of funding support for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows to adjust for inflation, and index the value of these funds to the consumer price index.

The Federation strongly supports the Committee's recommendation for increased federal investment in Government of Canada graduate scholarship and post-doctoral fellowship programs.¹ Federal scholarships and fellowships are critical to the development of Canada's research talent and to the strength of our research sector. Yet, as the recent Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System highlights, current support for Canada's next generation of researchers is "at a breaking point."² In some instances, the amounts of these scholarship and fellowship awards have not been adjusted for 20 years, and rising costs are devaluing them to the point where a recipient's income is below the poverty line.

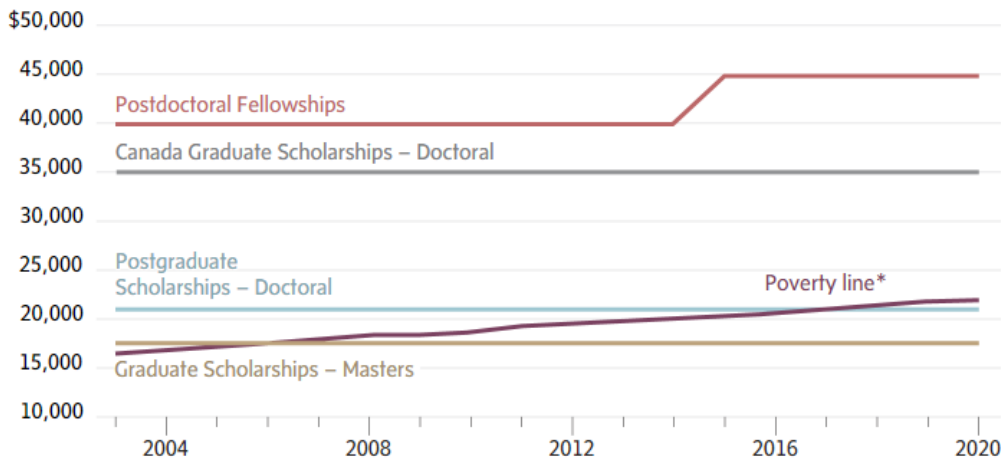
¹ Standing Committee on Science and Research. 2022. [Successes, Challenges and Opportunities for Science in Canada](#).

² Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. 2023. [Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System](#).



FLATLINED

Federal scholarship amounts for Canadian graduate students in the sciences have not changed since 2003. Amounts for postdoctoral researchers saw one increase in 2015.



*Based on single individual living in urban area with population greater than 500,000.

SOURCE: NATURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH COUNCIL, STATISTICS CANADA

Graph shared in Semeniuk, I. (2022 May 12). [Prominent researchers urge Ottawa to increase top science scholarships above poverty line.](#) *The Globe and Mail*.

Canada Graduate Scholarships are now worth 50% less than in 2003. As a country we can and must do better.

Graduate scholarships and post-doctoral fellowships must keep up with the cost of living. Increasing the value of these awards will support Canada's ability to attract, develop, and retain research talent, and ensure we remain competitive on an international stage. With our peer countries making significant investments in graduate student support,³ it is imperative that Canada not be left behind.

Inadequate funding support is a major barrier to pursuing graduate education and research careers. Investment in federal scholarship and fellowship programs can help address this barrier and promote a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive research sector in Canada. To ensure equitable access to these programs across equity-deserving groups, Federal granting agencies must continue to monitor applications to assess that success rates are proportionate to population rates. If persistent gaps in the access to these funds occur, dedicated funding streams can be created to mitigate these imbalances and support diverse scholars. An important example was Budget 2022's commitment of \$40.9 million over five years to support targeted scholarships and fellowships for Black student researchers.⁴

³ See Research Professional News. 03 May 2023. [UKRI PhD students to get 5% stipend increase for 2023-24;](#) and Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. 05 February 2021. [Higher pay for doctoral researchers.](#)

⁴ Government of Canada. 2022. [Budget 2022.](#) Chapter 2: A Strong, Growing and Resilient Economy.



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Investing early in a researcher's career through graduate and postdoctoral funding is linked to positive outcomes for research productivity,⁵ and provides important skills training and experience for researchers to build upon throughout their careers both within and beyond academia.

Fostering Canada's research talent across all disciplines, including the humanities and social sciences, will ensure we have the knowledge and skills we need to meet pressing challenges and thrive in a global economy. We look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Miller
President and Chief Executive Officer
Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences

⁵ The 2016 evaluation of the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program found that funding recipients produce higher rates of research publications and communications than applicants. Canadian Institutes of Health Research. September 2016. [Evaluation of the Canada Graduate Scholarships \(CGS\) Program, 2008-2013](#).