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May 24, 2024

## **Submission to the Standing Committee on Science and Research**

Re: [Study on the distribution of federal government funding among Canada's post-secondary institutions.](#)

### **RECOMMENDATION: Costly and inequitable Tri-Council EDI policies should be abolished.**

Dear Members of the Standing Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present you with this brief. In contrast to the other submissions to the committee – twenty to date – ours represents the views not of an institution or collective thereof, but rather the views of several individual researchers. While some may view this as a weakness, we hope most will see it simply as an act of conscience from academics no longer able to remain silent.

Many agree with us – including senior, tenured faculty – but will not speak publicly for fear of repercussions. Specifically, they are scared even to question Tri-Council policies relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). As we will outline in this brief, these policies disproportionately punish small institutions, are not supported by evidence, employ flawed metrics with no end goal, and are unpopular with the public who funds the research. That researchers are fearful of publicly speaking out against these policies reinforces our recommendation to abolish them altogether.

Note too that many similar legislative bodies are abandoning EDI. For example, MIT recently [dropped EDI statements](#) in faculty job applications,<sup>1</sup> and several US states – after discovering EDI measures lack empirical support – have [shuttered EDI programs](#) at their public universities.<sup>2</sup> More broadly, even US elite opinion is beginning to turn against EDI as exemplified by the recent [Editorial Board Opinion](#) from the *Washington Post*.<sup>3</sup>

### **EDI IS COSTLY AND PUNISHES SMALLER INSTITUTIONS**

Many of the briefs submitted to this committee lament low funding levels or inequitable distribution of federal research funding among institutions. While these arguments may have merit, we particularly agree with the sentiment expressed by other submissions regarding the costs of Tri-Council EDI policies. For example, the [ACCRU submission](#) states that overhead costs “*continue to increase with new compliance requirements announced by the Tri-agencies such as for EDI,*”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2024/05/08/mit-stops-asking-faculty-applicants-diversity-statements>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/three-more-states-drop-dei-programs-at-their-public-universities/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/05/19/universities-dei-academic-freedom/>

and disproportionately burden smaller institutions.<sup>4</sup> The brief from [University of Quebec at Trois-Rivières](#) also notes the unfavourable regulatory burden on small and medium-sized institutions, but also remarks that these costs extend beyond overhead because “*researchers are investing significant energy into looking at EDI and implementing measures that promote inclusion.*”<sup>5</sup> In summary, **EDI policies are costly to institutions and individual researchers.**

### **WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE THAT EDI BENEFITS RESEARCH?**

The recent push for EDI has had a dramatic, albeit largely silent, impact on academic inquiry and social cohesion at our academic institutions. Although these costly bureaucratic interventions are couched in lofty language, many concrete policies are discriminatory and counter-productive. For example, Laurier University aimed to hire [six black and six indigenous](#) faculty, but each position excluded the other ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> One of these positions – for an indigenous scientist – was granted to the home department of one of the authors of this brief (Horsman). During the process, an informal outside inquiry made on behalf of a promising black candidate had to be rebuffed because black people were ineligible. This [open racial discrimination](#) in the name of fighting systemic racism is one concrete example of negative impacts of EDI.<sup>7</sup> Canada’s most prominent academic freedom organization, *The Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship*, has [documented dozens of other cases](#) of academic job postings that specifically discriminate against individuals with particular immutable characteristics.<sup>8</sup>

Such disturbing accounts prompted us to weigh these costs against the purported benefits of EDI. However, upon reviewing the research literature on EDI, one of us (Haskell) found that there is [no evidence](#) that EDI reduces bias or alters behaviour. In fact, EDI interventions have been shown to do harm by increasing prejudice and activating bigotry.<sup>9</sup>

Since its publication in February, Haskell’s research report showing EDI measures have no positive effect has been corroborated by other research. In March of this year a [comprehensive analysis](#) of EDI research conducted by the *Inclusion at Work Panel* of the UK government determined that “[c]ausality between interventions and outcomes is often near impossible to discern... Definitive claims of ‘what works’ can be misleading or inconclusive. Results in one context cannot necessarily be replicated.”<sup>10</sup>

March also saw the debunking of some of the most influential studies claiming racial and gender diversity leads to greater profits and better decision making for corporations. Researchers

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/SRSR/Brief/BR13062472/br-external/AllianceofCanadianComprehensiveResearchUniversities-e.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/SRSR/Brief/BR13062477/br-external/UniverityofQuebecatTrois-Rivieres-067-240429-023-e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wlu.ca/news/news-releases/2021/may/laurier-to-hire-more-indigenous-and-black-faculty-members-through-inclusive-excellence-initiative.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/jamie-sarkonak-why-canadian-universities-are-refusing-to-hire-able-bodied-white-males>

<sup>8</sup> <https://safs.ca/archives-2022-2023/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://aristotlefoundation.org/reality-check/what-dei-research-concludes-about-diversity-training-it-is-divisive-counter-productive-and-unnecessary/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusion-at-work-panel-report-on-improving-workplace-diversity-and-inclusion/report-on-the-inclusion-at-work-panels-recommendations-for-improving-diversity-and-inclusion-di-practice-in-the-workplace>

publishing in the peer-reviewed [Econ Journal Watch](#) showed that the series of pro-EDI studies, commissioned by the McKinsey Company, were methodologically flawed and non-replicable.<sup>11</sup>

These findings motivated us to review how the Tri-Council agencies have arrived at their EDI policy. The [Tri-Agency Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\)](#) confidently asserts that “Achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Canadian research enterprise is essential to creating the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and understanding, and to respond to local, national and global challenges.”<sup>12</sup> Variations on this axiomatic statement are replicated by individual agencies, but supporting evidence is not provided. For example, the [NSERC Guide for Applicants](#) states: “The Evidence is clear. Equity, diversity, and inclusion strengthen the scientific and engineering communities and the quality, social relevance and impact of research.”<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, citations for such statements – to the extent that they exist at all – only link to other [Tri-Council web pages](#) that do not appear to address the foundational claim that EDI improves research.<sup>14</sup>

**We are concerned that the Tri-council agencies have provided insufficient evidence that EDI improves research outcomes, and therefore cannot justify their EDI policies.**

### **EDI IS SELF-PERPETUATING, HAS NO END GOAL, AND USES FLAWED METRICS**

New EDI policies need dedicated bureaucracies to manage and enforce compliance. Careers depend upon the continued existence and expansion of bureaucratic fiefdoms. It is, therefore, not surprising that, under [questioning before this committee](#), SSHRC president Dr. Ted Hewitt did not appear to have given any thought to how and when EDI requirements might end.<sup>15</sup> As MP Rempel-Garner pointed out, many of the race- and sex-based quotas for Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) have been nearly achieved or even – in the case of “racialized individuals” – [surpassed](#).<sup>16</sup>

As observed recently in the [National Post](#), “[t]he man in charge of administering the quotas can’t apply the brakes, and the university staff who are happy to soak up the identity-tied funds will insist that discrimination for a good cause isn’t discrimination at all. If diversity, equity and inclusion has an off button, it is incredibly hard to find.”<sup>17</sup>

Apart from the fact that race- and sex-based quotas are highly divisive and unpopular (*vide infra*), the metrics used to set these quotas are flawed. A standard requirement for a faculty position is a PhD or similar doctoral-level degree. However, Tri-Council targets are based on group representation in the general population instead of those holding PhDs.<sup>16</sup> As far as we know, the Tri-Councils do not publish statistics on the number of PhDs by race or sex. If the Tri-Councils and universities continue to enforce sex- and race-based quotas without regard for the composition of the pipeline, we risk overproducing PhDs belonging to groups facing legislatively limited prospects for employment and funding. Therefore, if the Tri-Councils insist on continuing

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<sup>11</sup> <https://econjwatch.org/articles/mckinsey-s-diversity-matters-delivers-wins-results-revisited>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/EDI-EDI/index\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/EDI-EDI/index_eng.asp)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/\\_doc/EDI/Guide\\_for\\_Applicants\\_EN.pdf](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/_doc/EDI/Guide_for_Applicants_EN.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/EDI-EDI/Resources\\_Ressources\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/EDI-EDI/Resources_Ressources_eng.asp)

<sup>15</sup> <https://parlvu.parl.gc.ca/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20240502/-1/41510> (starting at 13:06:00)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/about\\_us-a\\_notre\\_sujet/statistics-statistiques-eng.aspx](https://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/about_us-a_notre_sujet/statistics-statistiques-eng.aspx)

<sup>17</sup> <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/jamie-sarkonak-no-off-ramp-to-diversity-quotas-federal-research-executive-says>

EDI quotas, these **quotas should reflect the population of qualified Canadians rather than the general population.**

### **THE PUBLIC DISLIKES EDI**

Finally, we are concerned that EDI requirements politicize federal research funding, and in so doing weaken its credibility with the taxpaying public. For example, public [trust in science has declined](#) as EDI requirements have increased.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, political scientist Eric Kaufmann has [documented](#) how the Canadian public disagrees with EDI measures. For instance, 70% of Canadians prefer colour-blind approaches over the colour-conscious approaches of EDI.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the public is becoming aware that researchers must make written statements agreeing with EDI to access research funding. This places principled researchers who hold classically liberal values – such as race neutral evaluation of individuals based on merit – in a difficult predicament: they either must lie to receive funding, or act based on conscience and forego research funding. As one of us (Horsman) asked in a [recent op-ed](#), “*how much confidence can we have in a research ecosystem that incentivizes betraying oneself?*”<sup>20</sup>

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Considering (i) the significant costs of EDI, (ii) weak evidence for any benefits combined with known harms, (iii) that EDI uses flawed metrics with no end goal and will likely only expand, and (iv) diminishing public trust due to EDI policies like racial discrimination, **we recommend abolishing EDI from the Tri-Council agencies.**

Sincerely,

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-poll-finds-canadians-have-high-trust-in-scientists-declining/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/politics-of-culture-wars-canada/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/horsman-scientists-and-engineers-to-public-save-us-from-ourselves>

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