



Canadian Federation for the  
**Humanities and Social Sciences**

Fédération canadienne  
des **sciences humaines**

## **Investing in our Future**

### **Social Sciences and Humanities Research: Canada's opportunity**

**Submission to the House of Commons  
Standing Committee on Finance**

**by**

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## Executive summary

Ideas and knowledge are the currency that enables modern nations to thrive and compete globally. Research activities in the social sciences and humanities make an essential contribution to our country's efforts to improve prosperity and social well-being, both by stimulating the need for economic recovery in the short term and by shaping the broader prospects for Canada's future.

In these times of demanding economic challenges, the Government of Canada has the opportunity to make investments that will build on its innovation strategy and enhance the impact of the economic stimulus measures introduced in the last budget.

The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences calls for new investments of \$100 million over three years through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). These investments will advance the cause of Canadian excellence in research and enhance the use of knowledge generated by these disciplines for the benefit of Canadians. We propose:

1. \$50 million to increase the number of new scholars funded. This investment will help seed the next generation of excellence in the social sciences and humanities.
2. \$25 million to enhance the international competitiveness of senior scholars and to enable greater Canadian participation in international collaborative research projects, international grant competitions, and other world-class activities.
3. \$25 million to enhance knowledge mobilization of the humanities and social sciences for the benefit of Canadians, and to build capacity for collaboration and exchange.

## Introduction

The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences is the national voice for the university research and learning community in these disciplines. It is a non-profit, charitable organization that represents more than 50,000 researchers in 69 scholarly associations, 75 universities and colleges, and 7 affiliates across the country. Together, we constitute a substantial and integral portion of the intellectual infrastructure on which Canada can rely to build a more competitive and productive economy, as well as a stronger society.

Canada's economy has suffered during the global economic downturn, with its GDP falling by 3 percent between April 2008 and April 2009. Restoring Canada's economic health will depend on ensuring that the right mix of programs and measures is in place for a robust and resilient domestic economy. The social

sciences and humanities make a critical contribution by helping to provide the tools to address the impact of the downturn on individuals, families and communities.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in an environment that is changing rapidly due to technological and other drivers, the humanities and the social sciences are central to helping us understand and benefit from these changes.<sup>2</sup>

Successful economies will emerge from the present global recession, transformed and driven by new ideas and ingenuity. Tomorrow's successful societies will be built on creative and well-balanced communities.<sup>3</sup> These communities cannot exist without the social sciences, the arts or the humanities. A strategic investment in the social sciences and humanities would advance the goals the federal government set to achieve in Budget 2009, enhance the impact of its economic stimulus package for Canadians, and help build the creative economy of tomorrow.

## **Humanities and social sciences research – why it matters**

The knowledge generated in the social sciences and humanities enables social and economic progress in a number of ways. These disciplines are the source of many of the concepts and ideas that inform our understanding of the world. Research in these disciplines helps to build knowledge about people, their ideas and behaviour, whether as individuals or as members of groups or of society as a whole. The application of this research provides society with the nimbleness, flexibility and adaptability it needs to flourish. Those trained in these disciplines apply this knowledge in their day-to-day activities and in every sector of society.

By some measures, industries based on the social sciences and humanities account for over three-quarters of employment in Canada, and Canadians working in these industries bring with them the skills and knowledge they have acquired in these disciplines. These industries account for almost \$700 billion of Canada's GDP, and range from banks to media companies to arts and entertainment enterprises, as well as much of government itself.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Preston Manning, "Stimulating an Ailing Economy: The Crucial Role of Science, Technology, and Innovation," Public Policy Forum Science Day, May 27, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Indira Samarasekera, "Going for Gold – Reaping the Benefits of Investments in Research," Public Policy Forum Science Day, May 27, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> David Naylor, "A Special Message from the President," University of Toronto eBulletin, June 15, 2009 ([http://www.news.utoronto.ca/bulletin/EBULL/presidents\\_message06-16-09.html](http://www.news.utoronto.ca/bulletin/EBULL/presidents_message06-16-09.html)).

<sup>4</sup> The Impact Group, "The Economic Role and Influence of the Social Sciences and Humanities: A Conjecture," March 2008.

The research performed by our community helps improve service delivery, governance practices and business models. It also helps our industries understand the social, cultural and economic dynamics of the world, opening new doors for Canadian innovations in the global marketplace.

As arts and the humanities fuel the cultural life of our country and the creative industries that are becoming the trademark of Canadian entrepreneurship, research in the social sciences generates the knowledge that underpins our democratic institutions. Research in these disciplines also raises the standard of scientific and technological innovation by shining an inquiring light on its ethical, historical, cultural and social consequences.

### *Building Canada's advantages*

Social sciences and humanities research and skills are essential to create the entrepreneurial, knowledge and people advantages Canada needs, particularly at a time of economic challenges.

Research in these disciplines serves an important strategic function. When unexpected events occur, such as a terrorist attack, severe economic or financial dislocations, or the outbreak of a new illness such as H1N1, Canadians – and governments – need experts to interpret and explain what has happened and to help find solutions for the issues at hand. Our research provides analytic tools and yields the information needed to interpret the important issues facing of our nation—from our aging population to the impact of climate change on people, business and national sovereignty.

Much of the work of government at all levels deals with health, environmental, security, economic and policy issues that are rooted in the social sciences and humanities. A healthy reservoir of knowledge in these disciplines ensures that, no matter what the political, social, cultural or economic challenge, Canada has the expertise it needs to confront the unexpected.

Researchers and students across the social sciences and humanities are now at the heart of research and innovation as digital content and the use of digital media become the focus of attention. From literature to philosophy from

Finally, research in the human sciences has a direct impact on the life of Canadians in every region, empowering individuals and communities to deal with change – whether by adapting to it or by providing the knowledge and tools to assert their own view of how it should happen. For example, a research project at McGill University's Desautels Faculty of Management is delving into financial risk management and strategies for dealing with market volatility. Tools derived from this research may help address challenges such as those we face in today's economic climate. A SSHRC-funded program on globalization and

regional innovation systems at the University of Toronto's Munk Centre for International Studies examines why creative and innovative industries and individuals in specific fields are drawn to certain city-regions more than others. Understanding such trends will help Canada's long-term prosperity. Research funded by SSHRC is also helping to ensure that Canadians have the skills to participate and lead in the global knowledge economy. A team of researchers at Wilfred Laurier University investigates ways to enhance early mathematical literacy in infants and toddlers in order to build a foundation for success once they begin attending school. These are only a few examples of the top quality research taking place at universities across the country and supported by SSHRC.

#### *Research funding – A tangible stimulus measure*

At a more immediate and practical level, in terms of economic stimulus, communities everywhere in Canada benefit in very tangible ways from the government's investment in research. Federal research grants and scholarships have a direct and rapid impact on communities by creating jobs for researchers and students, as well as for those providing support services to them. Funds help to purchase technical services, research equipment and supplies within the local community. Students rely on their stipends for lodging and other living expenses.

### **Why support social sciences and humanities research?**

A strategic investment of \$100 million over the next three years through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council will help create the conditions needed to help Canadians achieve new levels of excellence both in Canada and internationally. Our objective in calling for this federal investment is to enable the creation and mobilization of knowledge that would be useful to policy makers, businesses, and the public.

SSHRC is the gatekeeper to the excellence that underlies the creation of useful new knowledge. The Council's grants and fellowships are awarded through an independent, national peer-review process to ensure that only research of the highest quality leading to new knowledge is funded. Peer review is universally recognized as the most objective and effective way to allocate public research funds. In 2008, an international Blue Ribbon Panel assessed SSHRC's peer review process and concluded that it is "up to the best practices and highest international standards."

Today, more than ever, Canadians need knowledge to understand and deal with the complex, difficult issues of our age. No single discipline has all the answers. Canada needs to ensure that the research community can pursue investigations across the whole landscape regardless of discipline or approach. In the face of difficult challenges, the narrow targeting of research funding becomes detrimental to economic and social goals. With this in mind, the Federation calls for an appropriate balance between targeted and untargeted funding, which will assure the integrity, independence and uninterrupted flow of research.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Federation calls for \$50 million in SSHRC funding to increase support for new scholars and help seed the next generation of excellence in the social sciences and humanities.

By 2016, Canadian universities are expected to hire 30,000 to 35,000 new faculty in all disciplines. Given the proportion of full-time faculty in the humanities and social sciences, this suggests that 15,000 to 17,500 new scholars will be hired in the social sciences and humanities<sup>5</sup>.

These new researchers are highly qualified and committed to engaging in first class research. Technology-savvy, they have a strong desire to make an impact not only in the world of research but beyond the academic realm. This new breed of researcher and scholar is also more inclined to engage in interdisciplinary and emerging modes of research.

**Recommendation 2:** The Federation calls for \$25 million in SSHRC funding to enhance the international competitiveness of Canadian senior scholars who are, in many fields, among the best in the world.

This funding will be used to assist experienced Canadian scholars in winning international grant competitions, participating in international collaborative research projects, and gaining international recognition and prizes. Funding will enable Canadian scholars to participate fully in the international arena, ensuring that Canadians benefit from the fruits of these international collaborations.

A strategic investment to enhance the ability of social sciences and humanities researchers to partner and lead at the highest levels of excellence will bring a vital complement to programs such as the Canada Excellence Research Chairs and build significant national capacity for interdisciplinary research.

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<sup>5</sup> Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Trends 2007 (Volume 2, Faculty).

**Recommendation 3:** The Federation calls for \$25 million in SSHRC funding to enhance knowledge mobilization of the humanities and social sciences, and to build capacity for collaboration and exchange.

Knowledge mobilization maximizes the economic and social value of public investments in research by fostering the transfer, translation, exchange, and co-creation of research knowledge in spheres outside academia as well as between disciplines and large fields of knowledge. That exchange of and engagement with the research world, in combination with knowledge and experience held in the business, government and non-government sectors, leads to economic and social innovation and generally to the development of talent, knowledge and entrepreneurial capacity across Canada's expanding knowledge economy.

The funding would help to expand and build on a number of pilot initiatives already underway. Activities supported would include building capacity at universities and with individual researchers and graduate students to develop and manage linkages and relationships that foster the transfer, translation and mutual exchange of knowledge between the social sciences and humanities and research partners active in public, private and not-for-profit sectors, as well as sister-agencies. Particular emphasis would be placed on accelerated development and use of innovative information and communication technologies, including Web 2.0, interactive databases and open access publishing.

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