



## Letter to the Federal Political Party Leaders

The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) is the national organization that promotes, advances, and fosters excellence in graduate education and research. CAGS was formed in 1962 and provides a venue for dialogue and cooperation for its members – over 60 Canadian universities, two graduate student organizations representing more than 190,000 graduate students and the three federal research-granting councils.

Canada can be very proud of its world-class graduate education system. It has enjoyed considerable growth in enrolment in graduate studies, both master's and PhD's, but needs a significant increase in investment in graduate education to ensure that we remain competitive.

From 2009 to 2010, graduate enrolment rose by 4.0% and today there are more than 190,000 students pursuing full- and part-time graduate studies in Canada. Yet Canada's investment in graduate education and training ranks second last in comparison to other OECD nations in the production of doctoral students. With Germany, UK, and the US producing 2.1, 1.9, and 1.3 doctoral graduates per hundred population, Canada's value of 0.8 falls well behind the OECD average of 1.3 doctoral graduates per hundred population.

CAGS encourages the federal government to take the following steps to stimulate and sustain research and innovation, in order to promote long-term economic and social development:

1. Invest in the federal research-granting councils,
2. Invest in international graduate students in Canada,
3. Invest in innovative skills training for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, and
4. Invest in postdoctoral fellows.

### **1. Invest in the federal research-granting councils**

At a minimum, maintain the 2011 budget's proposed investment to keep up with inflation in the granting councils' funding and also to address the issue of rising indirect costs of research.



The Federal Government has a number of important funding initiatives, notably the Canada Graduate Scholarships and the Vanier Scholarships and most recently the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships, which have collectively enabled some of the brightest minds in Canada and from abroad to attend Canadian universities and participate in the research enterprise. To build on those foundations, however, requires investment to ensure the quality of their experience so that these young researchers can reach their potential. This can be best achieved by providing funding for the environments in which they will be working, the scholars with whom they will collaborate, and the resources needed to bring their research to fruition.

## **2. Invest in international graduate students in Canada**

Strengthen and promote Canadian institutions of higher education on the international stage by providing more graduate scholarships to international students, especially at the doctoral level.

CAGS welcomed the federal government's help in marketing Canadian universities abroad and the creation of the Vanier Scholarships, which support some of the best research students to study in Canada. The competition for top graduate students worldwide is very stiff and international students in tertiary education are highly concentrated in a few countries. Two-thirds study in only seven destination countries, among which Canada ranks sixth (after the US, UK, Germany, France and Australia), with 5.1% of international students. The Government of Canada needs to be proactive given the challenges that the globalization of tertiary education will bring.

## **3. Invest in innovative skills training for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows**

Support the granting councils in their investments in broader professional and transferable skills training for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, in preparation for what employers need or may need in the future. The CREATE program which was recently launched by NSERC is a great example of the kind of training program that will help outfit our students with the competencies that they need to thrive in an increasingly complex knowledge economy.

An increasing number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are pursuing careers outside academe: this is a way to increase research and competitiveness in industry. Greater attention to professional/transferrable skills training as part of university programs can enable highly qualified personnel to hit the ground running in



jobs outside academia. Likewise, partnerships between university and the private and not-for-profit sectors can enhance synergies.

#### **4. Invest in postdoctoral fellows**

Increase the number of fellowships available through the federal granting councils to postdoctoral fellows.

Research in Canada depends on the output of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows working in our institutions and with our industrial partners. They are significant and valued members of the university research community. It is important for Canada to invest more directly in postdoctoral fellows to help universities compete more effectively for talent here and abroad.

In conclusion and to reiterate, Canada can be very proud of its world-class graduate education system. The present and future of research and innovation in Canada hinges on our ability to attract, inspire, and support top quality researchers and to do this we require a strengthened and sustained commitment to graduate education at the federal and provincial level.