



Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing to you on behalf of students and postdoctoral fellows to encourage the Government of Canada to specifically invest in scholarships and fellowships for the next-generation of researchers. To outline the importance of this issue, we designed and conducted a nationwide survey on the current scholarships and fellowships programs at the tri-council agencies (CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC). Over 1000 responses were collected between October 9th and November 15th, 2018.

To ensure that the voices of these students and postdocs are represented in Budget 2019, we have attached a short preliminary report of our findings. The survey is ongoing into January 2019, at which point a more detailed report will be released.

In particular, students and postdocs have indicated that:

- **There is a need to increase both the number and value of awards.** Median recommended values for awards were \$22,000 for Masters level, \$35,000 for Doctoral, and \$50,000 for Post-Doctoral Fellowships.
 - 79% of respondents valued increasing the monetary value of the average award, and 91% valued increasing the number of awards.
 - 66% of those who received tri-council awards required additional funding to support themselves. Respondents were also concerned that the value of awards does not reflect discrepancies between costs of living in different cities.
 - 63% believe that Vanier and Banting elite awards should be reduced or abolished.
- 98% of respondents outlined a clear benefit to obtaining direct support through awards rather than indirect support from their supervisors.
 - Benefits outlined included increased salary, salary security, and a greater level of autonomy and prestige as researchers early in their career.
- 80% of international respondents recommended increased funding for international students, who are currently ineligible for most awards.
 - Support for international trainees helps attract the best and brightest talent to Canada.

Through this survey, Canadian and international research trainees have voiced the importance of scholarships and fellowships to their professional development, as well as their perspectives on the current awards ecosystem. Based on these results, we encourage the Government of Canada to specifically invest in scholarships and fellowships for the next-generation of



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researchers in Budget 2019. This will bolster the historic reinvestment for Canadian research made in Budget 2018, which outlined that “*the Government will be doing further work to determine how to better support students, the next generation of researchers, through scholarships and fellowships.*”

We once again thank the Government for their commitment to science and to the development of a talented and skilled next generation of workers. As outlined in our #Students4theReport open letter which was submitted to Budget 2018, a strong support for fundamental research is critical for promoting innovation in Canada and for supporting the next-generation of researchers. Increasing direct support to students through tri-agency awards will foster the careers of a diversity of trainees and prepare them for the jobs of the future. We look forward to continued engagement with the Government to ensure trainee voices stay included in these matters.

About us: Science & Policy Exchange is a student-run non-profit organization that brings the student voice to science policy discussions. Students and young researchers are critical, and often unheard, stakeholders in how the landscape of federal support for fundamental research evolves in the short and long term, and their voices must be included in these key discussions.

You can find more information about our survey at <http://sp-exchange.ca/events/survey/>

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
The Science & Policy Exchange Team

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