

Polytechnics Canada urges fairness in post-secondary investment for Budget 2008

Polytechnics Canada encourages Minister Flaherty to build on the success of Budget 2007 and introduce additional measures to facilitate research and commercialization activities between industry and polytechnics, as well as invest in career-ready graduates who are essential in today's global economy.

Polytechnics Canada is calling for leadership from the federal government's education investment to fairly support the three post-secondary streams – polytechnics, colleges and universities.

Polytechnics Canada is an alliance of seven large, internationally recognized post-secondary institutions committed to producing career-ready graduates who combine critical thinking with theoretical understanding and practical competence. The seven members are located in regions that drive the Canadian economy: The lower Fraser Valley, the Calgary/Tar Sands corridor, the Golden Horseshoe and the Kitchener/Guelph/Waterloo high-tech triangle.

Collectively, the seven members - BCIT, SAIT Polytechnic, Conestoga College, George Brown College, Humber College, Sheridan Institute and Seneca College – annually educate more than 500,000 highly-qualified people essential to Canada's economy by offering an array of credentials including applied bachelor degrees, diplomas, apprenticeships, certificates, post-graduate offerings, continuing education and corporate training, across a wide range of fields.

Polytechnic education and training is particularly important at this time, as the country manages economic challenges. Canada's future prosperity is being jeopardized because it is not equipping enough Canadians with the increasingly complex and knowledge-based skills being demanded by Canadian employers to compete in the global economy.

Canadian Polytechnic institutions share a successful history in preparing career-ready graduates who combine critical thinking with theoretical understanding and practical competence. They have achieved this by:

- providing career-focused and community responsive education developed in partnership with employers.
- committing to a wide range of credentials including bachelor degrees, diplomas, apprenticeships, certificates, post-graduate offerings, continuing education and corporate training, spanning many fields.

- combining theoretical and applied learning, relevant work experience, and the opportunity to participate in applied research and commercialization projects.
- offering pathways that allow students to build on their credentials; recognizing previous learning.

Prior to Budget 2007, federal and provincial transfer funding for post-secondary education had been dramatically reduced while federal research dollars had increased. Federal government expenditures on research have historically favoured basic research over applied.

Since polytechnics carry out applied research, they have not benefited from the increased dollars for basic research and as such have faced chronic under funding for the requisite education and training infrastructure.

Budget 2007 provided improved funding for education, skills training and research. Canadian granting councils and foundations are working hard to respond to the needs of industry for applied research on product and process development.

Polytechnics Canada urges Minister Flaherty to build upon its education and research investment in Budget 2007 by ensuring that it supports the three streams of post-secondary education – polytechnics, colleges and universities.

Increase Investment in Applied Research

Budget 2007 marked the first time the role of polytechnics and colleges has been captured in a federal budget and we encourage Minister Flaherty to increase this investment by investing \$150 million annually to support a dedicated applied research fund for applied research projects, capacity development at polytechnics and applied research centres.

A dedicated, responsive applied research fund, accessible on an ongoing basis without prolonged delay, would allow polytechnics and their industry partners to conduct projects and solve problems in a more efficient and timely manner. This accelerated process would be most beneficial in areas of concern to Canada's competitiveness such as environmental science and technologies, natural resources and energy, health and related life sciences and technologies, and information and communications technologies.

A dedicated applied research fund would allow for ongoing funding of valuable applied research projects conducted by polytechnics that are responsive to community needs, involve student participation and solve industry problems, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises. This investment would also provide funding for much needed capacity development which would allow polytechnics to allocate more staff time and institutional resources towards applied research conducted in partnership with industry.

Canada's polytechnics continue to call for an investment in the creation of Applied Research Centres in Canadian polytechnic institutions that would be original, innovative, and polytechnic. The value of these Centres will be highest where there is a coordinated approach that brings together research institutions, governments and the private sector to set priorities and share resources. The elements that would make Applied Research Centres unique such as: team-based multi-disciplinary projects, researchers with track records in applied research, hands-on student involvement at the undergraduate level, and accelerated applied research project schedules from conceptualization to commercialization make polytechnics a logical step for future investment in commercialization of research.

National Credential Transfer

Polytechnics Canada urges Minister Flaherty to build upon its education investment in Budget 2007 and support the development and design of a national credentials framework and accreditation system to enhance and facilitate the national transferability of credits, encourage student mobility and increase international recognition of credentials.

Current federal and provincial discussions on barriers to internal trade and labour mobility would provide an excellent forum to address and respond to the lack of academic mobility in Canada and facilitate a cross-jurisdictional response to national skills shortages, focused on the regions which drive the Canadian economy through collaborative training initiatives involving governments, industry and polytechnics.

We encourage you to visit the Polytechnics Canada website at:
<http://www.polytechnicscanada.ca/>

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