

As your constituent, I am writing to express my support for the Support Our Science movement and House of Commons petition e-4098, which requests increased government funding to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in Canada (www.supportourscience.ca). The SOS movement focuses on the state of direct fellowship programs. However, only 18% of NSERC Canadian student support is through these direct funding programs, the remaining 82% of student support still comes from regular NSERC programs, where funding for students represents 60-70% of the total cost of research.

Graduate and postdoctoral scholars drive the science and innovation that keeps Canada competitive on the global stage. Without their work, research, innovation, and economic development in Canada would grind to a halt. Despite their importance as the innovative workforce in science, engineering, health sciences, social sciences and humanities, federal funding to graduate students has not changed in nearly 20 years. This places the income of our graduate students below the poverty line, both those receiving direct support through fellowships and even more so for students supported through regular NSERC programs. During this same period, funding has only increased marginally for postdoctoral scholars - researchers who have completed a PhD. These funding shortfalls have been exacerbated by high inflation.

This stagnation in funding has made it untenable for many graduate and postdoctoral scholars to pursue or continue research careers in Canada. Low levels of funding exclude individuals who do not have a financial safety net, who have other duties (e.g., parents and caregivers), and adds to the exclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups in higher education. According to a report by the Council of Canadian Academies, Canada has the lowest investment in research and development amongst OECD countries. Meanwhile, the percentage of researchers per capita in OECD countries continues to increase, while it is declining in Canada.

Given these concerns, I ask you to support increased funding from the Government of Canada to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars funded directly and indirectly by SSHRC, CIHR and NSERC.

Specifically, I request that the federal government:

- 1) Increase the value of graduate scholarships and post-doctoral fellowships awarded by the Tri-Council agencies by 48% to match inflation since 2003, particularly the Canadian Graduate Scholarships–Master’s, Postgraduate Scholarships–Doctoral, and post-doctoral fellowships.
- 2) Increase the research program funding through the SSHRC, CIHR and NSERC by 30% which will allow a similar improvement in the indirect support of Canadian Graduate Master’s, Doctoral, and post-doctoral students.
- 3) Index all award values to the consumer price index, which will ensure awards are internationally competitive and increase with the costs of living.
- 4) Double the number of Postdoctoral Fellowships (PDFs) to account for the increased number of PhDs in Canada and recent cuts to the number of fellowships given annually.
- 5) Increase the number of Masters' and Doctoral awards by 50% to account for the increase in the number of graduate students in Canada over the last two decades.

Addressing these requests is an urgent national priority. Meeting this need will demonstrate Canada's commitment to the next generation of leaders, help drive Canada's innovation economy into the future, and prevent talent from leaving the country.

Thank you for your attention to these requests.