



SPEAKING NOTES FOR
DR. CHAD GAFFIELD, PRESIDENT
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
RESEARCH COUNCIL (SSHRC)
HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le président, de me donner l'occasion de me présenter devant votre comité avec mes collègues et la vice-présidente exécutive du Conseil, Mme. Carmen Charette. Votre étude sur les sciences et la technologie est très importante et je suis ravi d'avoir la chance d'y contribuer. Je veux mettre deux éléments en relief aujourd'hui : 1) la contribution des sciences humaines aux efforts du Canada en science et technologie ; 2) et les réalisations du Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines pour positionner le Canada dans le monde au 21^e siècle.

As you know, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council is the federal agency that promotes and supports research and training in the humanities and social sciences. And we are now playing a key role in implementing the new science and technology strategy to make Canada a global economic leader.

Our investments in the development of research and talent have helped build a broad, strong foundation of Canadian innovation and expertise on social, economic, cultural and political issues as well as on the human dimension of technology, the natural sciences and health sciences.

Let me give you one example of the projects we fund as an illustration of the increasing importance of such research:

Paul Messinger, a professor at the University of Alberta School of Business, has recently led a pan-Canadian study on e-commerce to explain why Canadian retailers were not keeping pace with Americans in internet commerce. His research analysed the conditions for “online success.” Working with businesses, he led a team to help understand the vital importance of real-time tools for website navigation and decision-making. He proposed policy options to help Canada avoid the boom-bust cycle of the internet

business. And now major Canadian retailers are putting his research results into action.

This example illustrates how our researchers help Canadians keep ahead of the changing times, a role that has become increasingly important since SSHRC was created in the late 1970s.

We began operations 1978 and we are now celebrating our 30th anniversary - our Pearl Anniversary - so we are celebrating the pearls of wisdom that our researchers contribute to Canadian society!

The goals of the new S&T Strategy build on past achievements and are directly linked to SSHRC's current ambitions of quality (including the promotion of international excellence), connections (across disciplines, between the campus and the larger community, and between Canadian researchers and others around the world), and impact (ensuring that our knowledge and expertise contributes to our prosperity and quality of life).

Specifically, we invest in the People Advantage that is emphasized in the S&T strategy by supporting the very best and brightest minds. In addition to offering scholarships to students, we support professors who, through their research, inspire and mentor the next generation of Canadians. In the changing economy and society today, our graduates are becoming more important than ever across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

Secondly, we foster the Knowledge Advantage by nurturing research excellence that builds understanding about people, communities, institutions and societies - in the past and present with a view toward making a better future. As is emphasized in the headlines of our newspapers everyday, our research about people – what they think and how they behave and why – is so crucial to our prospects in the 21st century.

And, third with respect to an Entrepreneurial Advantage, we support partnerships, connections and knowledge sharing to bring the benefits of research to society. We foster innovative collaboration with community organizations, businesses and government agencies, and we help Canadian experts lead international research networks. We are facilitating and enabling the mobilization of knowledge to enhance understanding and decision-making – in other words, to help build a stronger and stronger society.

Laissez-moi vous mentionner un autre exemple d'un projet de recherche pour illustrer mon propos: M. Réjean Landry, de l'Université Laval, a produit un corpus de recherche exceptionnel sur l'innovation et le transfert des connaissances. Il s'est penché en particulier sur comment faire passer les résultats de recherche aux entreprises, aux gouvernements et aux communautés qui en ont besoin. Il travaille en partenariat avec des réseaux diversifiés,

en santé, en administration publique, en sciences naturelles, et en technologie. En fait, ses approches interdisciplinaires, ses résultats de recherche et ses recommandations pratiques ont contribué à façonner ce champs de recherche à l'échelle internationale.

SSHRC has, through investments in research, enhanced significantly our capacity to address critical issues such as our aging population, immigration and diversity, the new economy, aboriginal life, and, thanks to the additional support given in Budget 2007, the research fields of management, business and finance. The new funding for these fields will increase our understanding of topics such as innovation, entrepreneurship, labour markets and sustainable economic development across multiple sectors and in the global context. More students, researchers and partners are now focusing on key issues such as industrial and technological development, information technologies, environment and sustainability, and financial and monetary systems.

And now thanks to Budget 2008, we will be able to increase our investments to further support research on the environment and the well-being of Northern communities.

Let me also emphasize that, at SSHRC, we have made major strides to enhance accountability through renewed governance.

Our council membership has been revised to be more inclusive of diverse sectors of society. Our organization has been restructured to make us more effective at moving knowledge into practical applications.

And given the central importance of independent expert evaluation to ensure both excellence and non-partisan transparency, we are increasing the participation of international researchers in our peer review system in order to ensure that our practices meet the highest international standards.

Let me also emphasize that there has been concerted and enthusiastic collaboration among SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR and CFI as we implement the S&T Strategy. The new investments announced in Budget 2008 will help us further advance the work we have accomplished separately and collectively.

Tout ça pour dire que le Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines est fermement engagé à contribuer aux efforts du Canada en science et technologie pour le bénéfice de tous les Canadiens et canadiennes.

Grand merci pour votre attention.