



Canada Foundation for Innovation  
Fondation canadienne pour l'innovation

## **Notes for a presentation**

**by**

**Dr. Eliot A. Phillipson**

**to the**

**House of Commons**

**Standing Committee on Finance**

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***Check Against Delivery***



I want to begin by thanking the Finance Committee for this opportunity. Although today marks the 14<sup>th</sup> appearance by CFI before a Parliamentary Committee since its creation in 1997, it represents my first opportunity as President & CEO to address Parliamentarians in this forum.

Since 1997 the Government of Canada has put into place the necessary conditions to build a strong research and innovation enterprise in Canada, and one that is competitive by international standards of excellence. This priority aligns well with the national interest to succeed as a country in the knowledge-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The government's investments in research have transformed the innovation landscape in Canada by enhancing the capacity of research institutions to undertake leading-edge research and innovation that will bring benefits to Canadians.

As a result, throughout Canada's research community there is an unprecedented level of enthusiasm and a sense of optimism for the future, particularly and importantly among young researchers; and internationally there is a growing recognition, indeed admiration, that when it comes to science, "Canada matters."

As part of its investment in research, the Government of Canada created The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) in 1997. The CFI's mandate is to fund research infrastructure in Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals, and non-profit research institutions, and thereby strengthen their ability to carry out world-class research and technology development that will benefit Canadians.

Seven years into its mandate, CFI has invested over \$2.7 billion in over 3600 research infrastructure projects at 118 institutions in 59 municipalities across the country. These investments are made on the basis of a rigorous assessment of merit, using international standards; and on the capacity of the program to enhance the training of future researchers, and to bring benefits, economic and social, to Canadians. When leveraging from partners is taken into account, the initial CFI investment of \$2.7 billion has generated over \$7 billion in infrastructure investments.

The impact of CFI's investments has been profound. Because CFI funds are awarded to institutions, based on their strategic priorities, the advent of CFI has catalyzed strategic planning by institutions and enhanced their differentiation and specialization. A stable financial environment enables medium and long term planning that promotes well-thought-out investments that will generate benefits in areas of strategic importance to Canada.

Similarly, because CFI supports infrastructure across the broad domains of research, it has been particularly effective in funding multidisciplinary projects that bring together researchers from physics, engineering, agriculture, oceans, environment, health, social sciences, and the humanities. This approach is important because many of the most exciting and leading-edge advances in research and innovation today are taking place at the boundaries between the disciplines.

CFI's investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure have also contributed very significantly to the development of world-class expertise in communities across the country by enhancing the

competitive position of Canadian institutions in recruiting researchers from abroad and in retaining the best and brightest of their faculty members. This success has been achieved in the setting of intense international competition. Last year alone, CFI assisted in the recruitment of over 3000 researchers to Canadian universities, colleges and research hospitals, including 1200 from leading institutions in other countries. These researchers in turn are attracting outstanding graduate students and trainees, who will be the engines driving Canada's innovation agenda tomorrow.

Because of its status as a foundation entrusted with public money, CFI attaches paramount importance to operating in an economical, effective and transparent manner, and to communicating its activities and results to a wide audience. As required by the Act which established the CFI, our annual report is tabled in Parliament each year through the Minister of Industry, and we are regularly called to appear before this Committee and other Parliamentary committees. The annual report includes information not only on financial performance, but also on CFI activities, evaluations, results and corporate plans.

Until now CFI has pursued a strategy designed to empower institutions to enhance infrastructure developments in their areas of priority. There is a continuing need for such an approach, but as we go forward, the need for new strategies is emerging, which we are currently addressing.

As Canada, like all industrialized countries, positions itself to be competitive in the innovation-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is critically important that commitment to the research agenda of the nation be maintained. This agenda will ensure the continuing generation of the knowledge that is essential for the innovation pipeline, and the ongoing training of the highly qualified personnel who will transform the new knowledge into products and services that will benefit Canadians. Much like education and health care, investing in knowledge creation is not a "one-time-only" event, but rather an ongoing commitment to the future prosperity of the country. Canada has made an impressive investment in its research enterprise during the past few years. We owe it to future generations to maintain the commitment.

*This concludes my formal remarks. My thanks to the Chair and Members.*