

February 23, 2009

The Honourable James Flaherty, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Finance

Minister's Office - House of Commons

Wellington Street

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

The federal budget presented on January 27, 2009 proposes to increase graduate student funding through the Canada Graduate Scholarship program by \$87.5 million over three years. While I am pleased this government appears to be making graduate students and our contribution to the future economy a priority, it is completely inappropriate to intervene in the awarding process by directing social science and humanities scholarships exclusively to a small number of graduate students in "business-related" degrees.

As a representative of the SGPS which represents over 3500 graduate and professional students at Queen's University, I am writing today to call on you to withdraw the targeting of Canada Graduate Scholarships. Simply put, it is not the government's role to direct the granting agencies as to what research projects it may or may not fund. This is precisely the reason why such bodies are independent from the government. Each of the granting councils allocates funding based on peer-review of applications. As such, each proposal is judged according to its merits. There is no good reason to discontinue this practice.

In light of the American economic stimulus package-which includes not only billions of dollars for research, but also for student debt relief-there is good reason to believe that the Government of Canada's weak investment in university research will not only hamper Canada's ability to effectively manage the global economic crisis, but will also precipitate the emigration of some of our best young researchers to the United States.

In closing, withdrawing the "business-related" stipulation on new scholarship funding is a small but important step that you can take to restore some good faith with the university research community.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

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