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Chair

Mr. Dan Ruimy

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•(1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.)): We have a quorum. In the interest of keeping to our time, we are going to start this sixth meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

Today I would like to welcome, from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Mr. Ted Hewitt, president; Dominique Bérubé, vice-president, research programs; and Nathalie Manseau, acting chief financial officer. Thank you very much for attending. I am looking forward to an interesting hour.

Go ahead. The floor is yours.

Dr. Ted Hewitt (President, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada): Thank you very much for that kind introduction, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today with respect to our operations, goals, challenges, and some of our strategic priorities.

[Translation]

Let me open with a brief introduction to SSHRC and its key role within Canada's knowledge economy and innovation agenda.

[English]

As you probably know, “social sciences and humanities” is really an umbrella term covering a broad array of disciplines and fields of study touching on many aspects of our lives, from psychology and social work to fine arts, linguistics, business, marketing, and communications, to name only a few of the disciplines we cover. Through grants, fellowships, and scholarships, SSHRC helps Canada's researchers and research institutions train the next generation of talented, creative thinkers and doers, build knowledge and understanding, and drive the innovations that address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

We have three core program areas.

[Translation]

First, our Talent program helps students and postdoctoral researchers develop skills and expertise in critical thinking, complex decision making and creative exploration. This accounts for 49% of program expenditures.

[English]

Our Insight program is our core support program for individuals, teams of researchers, and formal partnerships that create new

knowledge and understanding, representing about 41% of our program expenditures.

The Chair: I'm sorry, could you just hold one moment, please? We don't have translation.

My apologies. You may resume.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: No problem. I can repeat anything I said.

[Translation]

I can repeat it 1,000 times if you like.

Through SSHRC's Connection program, research knowledge is mobilized to inform Canadian and international research, debate, decisions and actions. This accounts for 10% of program expenditures.

[English]

On behalf of all three granting councils, SSHRC also administers—and this is an important point—four major programs you may have heard about: the Canada research chairs program, the Canada excellence research chairs program, the Canada first research excellence fund, and the research support fund. I would be happy to talk in detail about any or all of these programs in the question and answer period.

I did want to mention and emphasize SSHRC's key role in Canada's innovation agenda. I imagine there will be many questions about this. We often talk about innovation in terms of science and technology, but we always have to remember what drives real innovation and change, and that is people.

I firmly believe we have to move somewhat away from thinking about innovation in narrower terms. True innovation is a holistic enterprise, a multidisciplinary endeavour that gets to the heart of human behaviour. Researchers in the social sciences and the humanities can help us better understand the economic, social, environmental, legal, and ethical aspects of our changing world.

[Translation]

Research in the social sciences and humanities also contributes to the pressing issues of the day—and that is another real strength.

[English]

How will a changing climate, for example, affect Canada's coastal regions and northern communities? What kinds of infrastructural investments offer the greatest benefit to our cities and rural communities? How will we deal with population movements and the integration of refugees? How do we restore and maintain positive relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians?

[Translation]

SSHRC-funded research explores these and other critical questions that matter to Canadians.

[English]

To give you a sense of our work, let me provide you some context.

Currently, Canada's social science and humanities research community comprises no less than 24,000 full-time university faculty teachers, including many in colleges who work in our disciplines, 21,000 doctoral students, and 46,000 masters students across this country. This doesn't count the hundreds of thousands of undergraduate and diploma students engaged in social sciences and humanities research and training across the country.

Over the years, our funds for grants, fellowships, and scholarships have remained relatively stable at about \$340 million, but with a growing cohort of researchers, the gap between our funding potential and our reality is starting to widen. There's one thing I can assure you of, however, and that is that the vast majority of our funds, close to 93¢ or 94¢ out of every SSHRC-allocated dollar from the Parliament of Canada, goes directly to fund researchers.

SSHRC handles as many as 12,000 to 13,000 applications every year. Depending on the funding opportunity, a single competition may receive anywhere from 100 to more than 3,000 applications. To evaluate these applications, we rely on a rigorous, world-class merit review process. More than 600 members—experts, researchers—sit on our 90 assessment committees each year, supported by an additional 6,000 external assessors and experts from Canada and around the world. I should emphasize as well that the work of these assessors is entirely voluntary and represents a contribution to our efforts at SSHRC in the amount of more than \$8 million.

I'd also like to say a word about partnerships. At SSHRC, we recognize that government, industry, and academia must work together to provide high-quality evidence-based research to inform policy and decision-making. SSHRC currently funds 212 multi-disciplinary cross-sector partnerships involving 46 post-secondary institutions and nearly 1,500 partner organizations. On average, our partnership grant-holders leverage more than 80¢ for every dollar of SSHRC funding, so that's 80¢ in addition to the contribution of the people of Canada.

I'd like to give you a few examples of the partnerships we fund.

Pavlos Kanaroglou, a professor in geography and earth sciences at McMaster University, is partnering with the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ford Motor Company, and Burlington Hydro to research the social costs and benefits of electric mobility in Canada.

David Connell, an associate professor at the University of Northern British Columbia, is partnering with Agriculture and

Agri-Food Canada and the Max Planck Institute of Germany to research agricultural land use planning to help conserve farmland and promote farming.

Susanne Lajoie of McGill University is working with the Centre de recherche informatique de Montréal to study technology-rich learning environments and to improve learning and retention in schools.

● (1540)

Turning to our strategic priorities, Canada's researchers operate in a context far removed from that which existed when we were created back in 1977. With new and emerging digital technologies, an explosion of research crossing fields of study and even whole disciplines, and the increasing involvement of non-academic sectors in creating and mobilizing knowledge, today's campuses offer a very different research environment from those almost 40 years ago.

[Translation]

To address this challenge, we have carefully reviewed our programming, engaged the research community we serve, and analyzed the needs of the country's evolving labour market. This has shaped and informed our new strategic plan—a blueprint to guide SSHRC's operations over the next five years.

Three strategic objectives lie at the heart of this plan.

[English]

First, we aim to enable excellence in a changing research environment such as I've just described. We will help ensure that Canada maintains and enhances its globally competitive position as a producer of high-calibre research embracing new and diverse forms of research excellence.

Secondly, we want to increase the scope and scale of our research investments and impact by building new and innovative partnerships. SSHRC will seek out and establish promising strategic opportunities for Canadian research, training, and knowledge mobilization through joint funding and other collaborative initiatives, both in Canada and abroad.

Finally, we are exploring better ways of connecting social sciences and humanities research with Canadians. We'll advance opportunities for the results of SSHRC research funding to be more accessible for organizations in all sectors, contributing evidence-based research to address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

To conclude, for nearly 40 years, SSHRC has continued to meet the high standards expected of us by the research community and the public. All of this we undertake as stewards of public funds and the public trust, accountable to the Canadian people and responsible for using its resources wisely and well.

[Translation]

That's why, with our sibling councils, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, SSHRC is working to harmonize our programs to deliver them more effectively and efficiently.

• (1545)

[English]

We do this to ensure that our colleges and universities can develop and attract a younger generation of talented researchers who will take up the challenges of delivering real results for Canadians.

[Translation]

We do this because we know that the pursuit of knowledge and new insights directly improves our lives for the better.

[English]

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak with you today. We are more than happy to answer questions on this or any other aspect of our operations.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Well done. I am looking forward to hearing some really good questions today.

Our first questioner of the day is Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all I have to say it's wonderful to have you here. I've really been looking forward to today's conversation and the work that you've done on behalf of Canadians for several years. Great presentation. There is no "but" in that.

It's very important when we're looking at tri-council funding. I represent the riding of Guelph, which of course has a university that relies heavily on tri-council funding, and the role that this plays in developing the landscape for research in economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

You showed matching of 80¢ on the dollar in terms of funding. I wonder if you could comment on maybe the range of gaps that we have. That's the gap. That 20¢ is the gap between a researcher being able to carry out a project, keeping the lights on.... That 20¢ has to pay for things not included in funding applications, like overhead costs, lighting, and just having a university in place to do the work. Sometimes, in some universities, that becomes a barrier to actually implementing the research that is done.

Could you comment on maybe the direction that this gap is heading, or whether there's something that Canada First Research Excellence funding could do to help us with that gap?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Sure, I'll clarify that. It's a great question, but I may answer this a little differently from the way you've asked it. I'll point out that we're saying that through our projects and through the projects we fund, we are able to bring another 80¢ to the table in addition to the dollar that's been provided by SSHRC and by the Parliament of Canada. In some cases, in some competitions, we've actually brought more than that, maybe a whole other dollar to the table.

The issue that you've pointed out is absolutely critical because what it shows is we need to bring this funding to the table in order to

be able to fund precisely the kinds of costs that you've identified. In the case of researchers, costs have multiplied over the years, inflation has eaten away at the funding that's provided, so there's always an effort to make sure that we're able to cover all the costs required to deliver the outcomes that will have impact.

The institutions have their own costs, as many of you well know, some of which are supported through the research support fund. About 20% to 25%, depending on the institution, is returned in additional funds to institutions to help them cover costs for electricity, maintenance, libraries, technology transfer operations that have costs that extend well beyond what we provide to the researchers to cover.

It's a system. There are several elements to the system. As you've pointed out, quite rightly, there's the research that's done and the people who need to get paid. In our case, the researchers are paid by the provinces for the most part through their salaries. They need research assistants, they need to travel a bit, and they may need supplies. Then we can't forget that the university has to provide the environment to support that research, an additional cost, about 25¢ on the dollar. They would say it's twice that, but I'm not here to advocate for them.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: It depends on which university you're talking about.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Absolutely...the students and the training costs, the infrastructure and the equipment costs.

When we talk about research and innovation, I always say we have to think about several legs of the stool that are involved. We provide one leg. There are several other components.

Thank you very much for that question.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you. I'll keep going on the line of questioning around the innovation centres across Canada and the network of universities across Canada. You've had some skill through the program that you have for funding research chairs and an intimate knowledge of the university network.

This committee will be looking at things around, hopefully, the manufacturing state of affairs, and how universities and research centres can help with manufacturing, as an example. There may be other sectors we choose, going forward, to work with.

If we were to work with your department, is that something you could help us with in terms of understanding where the strengths are, whether it's nanotechnology in British Columbia or whether it's material sciences in McMaster? Do you have that kind of knowledge that we could draw on?

• (1550)

Dr. Ted Hewitt: We absolutely do. We're more than happy to do that. In meeting individually with MPs and deputy ministers and ministers, we have one standing offer among others. That offer is that if you are interested in research that's being done in Canada and funded in Canada through us, we are more than happy to search and mine our database to provide you with lists and detailed information on research that's been done in a particular sector, since we've been funding research and have the records.

One example I can give you concerns a member from Essex-Kent in the last government who wanted us to give him a list of research that was done on the greenhouse industry in southwestern Ontario. We gave him a list of probably 15 different projects that we funded over the years. Then we came back to him and said, "Now, what do you want to know more about? We'll dig further for you."

[Translation]

Absolutely, we are ready to do those types of things and to provide that sort of assistance.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: That's terrific, thank you.

The Chair: You still have a minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: NSERC would be another of the tri-council funds. What's your relationship with NSERC and with CIHR? Is there a formal relationship, or is it informal? Could we use you to work with those agencies, or do we work with them separately?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Absolutely. We work very closely with NSERC. They are part of our portfolio within Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. We work very closely with CIHR.

We share with NSERC a number of administrative services directly, including human resources, information services, and financial services. We share space.

The presidents meet once a month to discuss issues with the president of CFI. Anything that would come up here, or through conversation, or through an email to me, I would raise with the other presidents in those forums, but that would be easily done. I'm proud of our relationship and the one we developed in the last few years.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you. You have confirmed that you are going to be a key strategic partner for this committee, and I look forward to working with you.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You had five seconds left.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernier, the floor is now yours.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I apologize for being late. My parliamentary obligations have kept me in Parliament longer than expected.

Mr. Hewitt, I will ask you a question that my Liberal colleagues may have already asked, but I will pay attention.

Do you sometimes receive private funding for your research or is your research fully funded by the government? Do you turn to private partners for your research?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Absolutely. In fact, through our collaborative research program, we have encouraged the participation of many companies. About 10% of partners come from this program. We have close to 300 active partners because of this program. Nearly 300 companies are active participants and contribute to funding. Earlier, I mentioned the 80¢ for every dollar of funding under this program.

That's fantastic. It is a good way to attract the private sector, and it's working.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: It is also a good way to ensure that research is aligned with priorities.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Thank you for pointing that out, sir.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Speaking of research aligned with the private sector, what concerns or requests do you hear from business people on a regular basis? What would they like to see in your mandate? Do people sometimes suggest things that you are not able to do because they are not within your mandate? You have been around for many years. Have you identified needs for improvement in order to increase your internal productivity and to better address the needs of your clients? Are you able to accomplish that with what you have right now or should changes be made to your mandate for that to happen? What are the day-to-day concerns of the business people you meet for you to continue to serve them well?

• (1555)

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I will begin and then I will turn the floor over to Ms. Bérubé.

In my view, the biggest problem is that entrepreneurs and companies are not really sure about what SSHRC does. That is our main challenge. We have a lot to offer to those companies and to the Canadian public, but we have a little more work to do on raising awareness about what we can bring to that community.

I know there are other challenges, but I will give the floor to Ms. Bérubé.

Ms. Dominique Bérubé (Vice-President, Research Programs, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada): Let me give you an example.

In a recent discussion with the folks from Mitacs, we talked about an Ontario company where 15 intern engineers were working on water treatment processes. Instead of hiring a consultant, these people accepted as their 16th intern a student specialized in international political science. The student helped them understand how the Chinese company that they had just bought operated. They were having a hard time aligning their processes with those of that company because of the cultural differences. The student suggested a whole host of solutions, and things worked out well.

I would also like to talk about the future of PhDs and the training of students in all sectors. How will granting councils be able to change their student support programs to enhance the training of those who will not have an academic career but will likely be integrated into industry or government?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Since you are a public agency interested in research, do you think your work or the funding you provide in support of research might be slightly influenced by politics?

Do you think that might have an impact and that the goal is less to promote economic freedom or other things like that? Perhaps this is a more philosophical question.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I would say that's not the case at all. At any rate, researchers choose their areas, their research topics in co-operation with industry. That's the way things work and I must admit that this is not a concern for me.

There is a peer review process in place, which works very well around the world. These are best practices that SSHRC and other Canadian agencies can use.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Speaking of best practices, I would imagine that some international organizations operate like you. I assume that sometimes you have international meetings with organizations whose mission is the same as yours.

Do your work methods or their efficiency enable you to be competitive?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Absolutely. I would say that we are the best in the world. In addition, our administrative expenses are not high at all. They actually represent 6% of our total costs. As I mentioned earlier, about 95% of our funding goes to researchers.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Has the new Liberal government provided you with a mandate letter or new guidelines?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Not yet. We are waiting for the budget.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: As are we.

[English]

The Chair: One second.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: May I just ask you a question, Mr. Chair?

[English]

Do you know when the minister will be with us?

The Chair: Yes, I have a date. We'll talk about it afterwards. Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Bernier.

Mr. Masse, the floor is now yours.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here today.

I know there has been a lot of discussion over a number of years, and we've had to push back against budget cuts in the past and ensure that there's adequate funding. Then there very important issues related to moving patents and work to manufacturing, especially in our country where we have a very poor record of moving patents, and I'm not blaming you.

However, at the same time, I'm also very concerned about all research just being done with the private sector and trying to look for outcomes first and foremost, versus exploratory research work. I say this because if you look at history, a lot of the inventions that have changed our lives have been accidents. They've been from projects where the aim was to achieve a certain result X, but then these other things emerged from of them. There are all kinds of examples of that out there.

Speak to me a little bit about that element. Here I would say that I think you occupy a unique space on this that others don't, and there is tremendous added value for pure research without a derivative at the end of the day. I'd like to hear a little bit about that.

• (1600)

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I would go on the record as saying that we share your concern. Our mandate is to fund research and training in social sciences and humanities in Canada and to provide advice to government. Our view is that this is best applied to research that's further upstream in terms of the development of novel ideas and approaches. That doesn't mean we don't fund more applied research, or research that results in patents or copyrights or other forms of protection, but we are, through our own practices and our own regulations, silent on how that will be applied properly by the researchers themselves and by the universities or the colleges where they work.

We have an interest, and we've done research, in areas around commercialization and IP transfer. I'd be happy to talk further about that, about some of the work that is being done on clusters and incubation. I myself am doing some work currently on open innovation versus more closed models.

That's the beauty of SSHRC, in a sense. We are the agency that's funded in fact to reflect on some of the practices and some of the priorities and some of the policies that you're referring to in your comments that would direct or otherwise assist the movement of intellectual property into the private sector. I'll just repeat that, fundamentally, our view is that our role is best served by funding more open research at the upper end.

One anecdote I'll give you, which I've repeated many times, is based on a study that was done a few years ago. Looking at the first page of patent applications in the U.S., and looking at the citations to previous research on the first page of patent applications—I don't know how many they looked at in this research, maybe 5,000—70% of the citations came from U.S. publicly funded institutions. In other words, basic science was driving the innovation that was subsequently put forward for protection.

So we have an absolutely critical role to play in the front end of this process.

Mr. Brian Masse: You know, that's just it; often this is overlooked, but they're like building blocks. Other types of work get done later, but if we have it all derived from just trying to create a better widget X, that's fine for certain research where we want to move it along. I guess what has been bothering me is the fact that often with those innovations, and the investment Canadians make through SR and ED tax credits for the private sector, they end up being manufactured somewhere else. It's sometimes in competition with Canadian businesses out there.

I would like it if you could come back at some point in time with some good examples. I think we need to do that to reinforce the case that there are some alternatives out there and there are some new things that just kind of happen.

Go ahead.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: You've raised an interesting point, and I just want to pick up on it a little bit. It's one I've mentioned often. That is, some of the research that's done in the upper end of the spectrum doesn't always result in new products and in technological advances, particularly in our areas. This economy in Canada is about 70% to 75% services—financial services, banking services, insurance, and so forth—yet all of the research that's done that eventually finds its way into those industries or into those endeavours is not counted. It will only now be counted by Statistics Canada.

The other piece of this is that as far as the SR and ED credit goes, none of that research is eligible for SR and ED financing: none of it. Yet one could argue that this is a pretty critical part of our economy.

This is the case we're trying to make, that a lot of the research we fund may not find itself in a new product. It might find itself in a new process. It might find itself in a new financial product or a new way of thinking about how to organize and commercialize in the service sector, not to mention the contributions it makes to policy. If you're saving a dollar, you're generating a dollar for the people of Canada. I really don't want folks to forget that. That's part of the innovation question as well. So I thank you for raising that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Brian Masse: When you're looking at supporting different universities and programs, do you have a pan-Canadian approach in making sure that nobody is left behind, so to speak? Do you work within the expertise of some of those universities to try to see what they can do versus others? I know we have different boutique universities related to the development of different products, education being the most important, obviously.

• (1605)

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I'll have to answer by saying yes and no—in a way. The first part of the answer is that we are an agency that supports all Canadian researchers in the post-secondary sector. We have competitions that are open to all researchers and students. The applications will come from anywhere and everywhere in Canada. After the fact, from the analyses we've done, the distribution is roughly proportional to population. So it pretty much turns out that way.

As far as the principles of excellence and peer review and selection go, we're pretty blind to where things come from. It pretty much works out, and it demonstrates really the strength of research and scientific endeavour right across this country.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will go to Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Dr. Hewitt and colleagues. Thank you for taking the time to be with us.

As an engineer and a businessman, I'm always interested in emerging technology as well as the applied side of that technology, with a special focus on creating jobs and the impact that it has on the economic growth.

Having said that, I had the opportunity to look at your presentation from last year, which I believe was on Thursday, May 7. As I'm a person who is interested in the emerging technology, one thing jumped out at me. I'll quote so I'm not misrepresenting what was said. You said:

...emerging technology and how best to take advantage of it is the subject of a knowledge synthesis grant opportunity that SSHRC will be launching this fall.

That was the fall of 2015. You said that this “funding opportunity will help our state of knowledge about”, one, “emerging technology”, two, identifying “gaps in our knowledge”, and three, “the most promising policies and practices related to” that. To that extent, I have five questions that I will bombard you with, and then you can answer them.

First, of the \$340 million that you have in your budget, how much have you allocated to this grant program and what sector specifically is being focused on?

Second, what “emerging technology” has been identified so far?

Third, what are the “gaps in knowledge” that were identified?

Fourth, what are the related “policies and practices” identified that needed to be looked at?

Lastly, as a businessman, for every dollar that was invested in this emerging technology, what do you anticipate or what does the research anticipate will help create jobs and have an impact on the GDP?

Take it on.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes, I'm good, but I'm not that good. I think I got a few of the questions, so if you wouldn't mind, as we go along...?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That's okay. Do you want to start with the first one?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes. I'll start and everyone will help me.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Sure.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: To be clear, the program is now in place. It's part of a broader endeavour that SSHRC undertook through a broad consultation process starting about two years ago. It was called “Imagining Canada's Future”. The sole objective of this program was to help identify, with the help of Canadians and researchers, the public, and people in government and elsewhere, what would be the real research challenges in the coming 10, 20, 30, or 40 years. We identified a whole range of these.

Through this process, at the end of the day we said there were six.

Emerging technologies is one. It's pretty obvious. As you know, we all carry these things with us and they're giving us a lot of help, but they're also bringing a lot of challenges with them in terms of technology.

Another was mechanisms and new ways of teaching and learning. I think we all have opinions about how well our post-secondary schools are doing—and even our primary and secondary schools—in helping to instruct students.

Another that we heard again and again was aboriginal people and aboriginal communities. What are the challenges? How do we work together? How do we bring communities together to help them prosper, both on the aboriginal side and on the non-aboriginal side?

What are the challenges of big populations? As we grow and as we tend to consume more resources, how are we going to deal with this?

Where is Canada going in the world? Where are we going to be in 20 or 30 years? We're a major trading nation. Who will be our trading partners? Will we still be dependent on the United States in terms of trade?

The last one was in natural resources and energy.

That was the point of the exercise. The grants themselves are quite small. They were established in the range of about \$25,000 to \$50,000, I believe. The point was not to do the research to answer the question, but to do the research to tell us what's been done already and where the gaps are, because this is something that we need to know before we can go forward and start to really dig down on where we need to start working.

In that context, the amount that would be applied for the entire program would be minimal—in the order of \$1 or \$2 million out of discretionary funding that in fact for the most part comes under my control as president.

In terms of the impact of this, it's in a very early stage. Obviously the money is used, as in the case of all our grants, to fund student assistants and other types of research assistants directly. The rule of thumb is that about 75¢ out of every \$1 in research and in our domain goes to people, and that creates employment.

But we're still so far upstream in terms of where we'll go that I cannot say to you that the impact of this will be the transformation of industries X, Y, and Z. What I can say to you is that as a result of this process—we've only done two so far and we're right in the middle of the emerging technology call—I'll be able to tell you that we now have a better idea of where the major challenge lies and where we should be committing dollars to learn more. Is it IT and bandwidth? Is it about teaching and learning with respect to new technologies? Or is it about workers and retraining of workers? We're going to have a much better idea of what that is when the process is completed.

I've probably left some things out.

Dominique, did you want to add anything?

• (1610)

Ms. Dominique Bérubé: For the emerging technology, the grants have been adjudicated. It's a question of giving the money to the researchers so they can do the synthesis.

There's going to be a symposium, and there's going to be a report. We might invite you to the symposium if you're interested to come. It will be in 2016-17, or in 2017-18 maybe for the researchers to do their jobs and then the symposium. I think the symposium would be in early 2017. After that we will make a compendium, a global report, that we could also send to the committee if that interests you. In fact we could probably provide you a copy from the six challenges.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That would be great.

Do you have any early indicators based on the intake process and the requests that you have?

The Chair: You're running out of time. You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Okay. We'll talk after.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: We will share.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will go to Mr. Dreeshen for five minutes.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, folks, for coming here today to talk to us about what is an extremely important role that you have.

I want to hear a little about SSHRC's responsibilities, but that's more a play on words than anything. Most of us around this table have science and engineering backgrounds, and so on. When we look at some of the different things that are expected, and aspects of the studies that you have, and what is going on, I think that in a lot of ways we look at it from the perspective of true scientific discovery rather than political science, or maybe social science. As I've always said about scientists, they'll never say there's a zero result of something happening, and that's when the political sciences jump in it to tell you that means it's terrible. I guess that's part of it.

One of the terms that always gets thrown into the mix is the term "social licence". I think it's important that everyone recognizes the metrics that are used, because that's where the political science side of it comes in. It must be extremely difficult for you to be able to look at different projects or their different components and the people who might want to be part of that, and separate what should be out of it and what should be in it. That's more or less a comment that I wanted to make.

The other part is that you say that your grants are small, but certainly to the people we have talked to they have been well received. You can be proud of that part.

I did go through your imagining Canada's future initiative that you launched in June 2011. One of the things I did want to emphasize is that one of the six future challenge areas asked, "What effect will the quest for energy and natural resources have on our society and our position on the world stage?" I think that's what I was getting at when I was talking about the concept of social licence and the types of things that are going on there.

I'm wondering how you're able to make sure that all of the discussions taking place are fair. I have a background in agriculture as well, and so I noticed that one of your projects was with someone who was studying at the Max Planck Institutes in Germany and trying to research agricultural land use. I know a lot of people from Europe, and their farming practices are very different from ours. Expectations, uses of genetically modified organisms, and all of those other sorts of things also tie into the same point I was making earlier.

I'm wondering if you could give us a bit of an overview of how you have maintained the credibility that one would anticipate from true scientists doing true scientific work.

•(1615)

Dr. Ted Hewitt: This is an extremely important question, and I want to be absolutely clear. I can't tell you that everybody likes everything we fund. That's a fact. I can say that—and I think the other presidents can probably say the same thing.... One thing I have to say and be absolutely clear about is that in our calls, with the funding we receive from the Parliament of Canada, we are completely open, in terms of who can apply, with what partners, and to research what question.

Sometimes we put some boundaries around that. We've had targeted money, in the past, for management, business, and finance, or for the environment, or for the north, but generally calls are pretty wide-open. You can see a lot of different things coming in from a lot of different places.

The one thing we assure the researchers, this committee, and the Parliament of Canada is that the filter we apply is subject to best standard and best practice globally, in terms of the evaluation by peers and experts, to ensure that at the end of the day, regardless of whether folks like or don't like a project, that project was deemed to be the best project in its class and was funded for that reason alone. We will stand by that until the day they close the doors, because if we lose that, we lose everything. I want to assure you of our absolutely best efforts to make sure that always happens.

On the side of social licence, this is one area where I love to talk, to demonstrate how important we are in the innovation process and in the economy of Canada.

We now work with FPAC, which is the Forest Products Association of Canada; we work with the mining community; we work with the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, mostly around social licence issues. Why?

In the old days, people would say, "What do you need social science and humanities for?" "Oh, well, they are ethical issues." True. "They are legal issues." Yes. "They are policy issues." Yes. Until one day, somebody woke up and said, "We want to build a pipeline through there, but the community is not really keen on this". Even though the law says you can, good luck in digging the hole. You need to get that social licence in place in order to be able to pursue your interest, whatever that is.

The research that we do is often around what the issues are, what the community is looking for, and what approach companies should take, in terms of negotiating with communities, to find solutions where everybody benefits.

The Chair: I hate to cut you off. I am sorry. You went over time.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: We are going to talk about that again, though.

The Chair: We can see where the passion is coming from. Thank you very much.

We are now going to move to Mr. Arya. You have five minutes.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You deal with advanced research. You mentioned your new strategy plan for the next five years, but your website still has your old strategy plan of 2013-16.

Have you evaluated your old strategy plan and compared what you planned to achieve with what you have achieved, before the end of this, before you launched the new strategy plan?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes. Thank you for your question. The good thing about working in a shop where there a lot of policy people is that this becomes a routine exercise.

That came up, specifically. Our council chair is Jack Mintz. Some of you may know he is a very well-regarded Canadian economist. That was the first thing he said: "Do you know where you've gone, before we get going?" We undertook a cross-organization exercise to review what we had proposed in this first plan, with what success, what doors were still open, and what doors we could now move on through.

•(1620)

Mr. Chandra Arya: Can we get a copy of that?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Do you mean the actual evaluation?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Yes.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I would have to see what form that took, at that point. There would be some internal documents, so I will go back and see what we did, in terms of the box-ticking exercise.

Mr. Chandra Arya: In your closing remarks, you mentioned working with your siblings, CIHR and NSERC, but nowhere do you mention working with the Canada Foundation for Innovation. Is there any reason?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Absolutely. Very closely. No. They operate on a slightly different basis. They report through industry, through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED, that's true. But in fact, as agencies we were established by the Parliament of Canada. We are formally agencies reporting through the minister to Parliament.

But we work very closely with them otherwise. They have more independence, for example, with respect to their funding and how they use their funding than we would have, but we work very closely.

Mr. Chandra Arya: You mentioned about 12,000 to 13,000 applications; the website said 13,500. At first glance it appears that the funding and support is spread thinly all across Canada across so many universities.

Would it not be better to focus on some specific topics with selected universities and focused funding there?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes. We're limited in our funding. We have funds that are about one-third of the other agencies for research and for training, so the more we focus, the less we have for open research. It's pretty much that simple.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Now, we're talking of infrastructure. Infrastructure has become a sexy word because billions of dollars are being talked around it.

You mentioned that research in social sciences and humanities also contributes to the pressing issues of the day like infrastructure. Can you give us some specific examples of that?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: On pressing issues like infrastructure with respect to policy and infrastructure placement, for example, with respect to placement of pipelines and pipeline construction or other projects that would affect communities....

If you're asking me for specific examples, I'd be more than happy to provide them. I don't come today with them in hand, but we're absolutely prepared to provide those examples based on funded projects.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Your new fire strategy plan document will be uploaded shortly—

Dr. Ted Hewitt: It has not been approved by council. It will be on March 14th, which is next Monday. Thank you, sir.

The Chair: You're giving the rest of your time to Mr. Baylis.

Mr. Baylis, you have a minute and a half.

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you.

In your opening statements you talked about looking to what drives innovation and change in people. Then you gave an example. You spoke about the pipeline where we might have legal licence but not social licence.

Can you expand on that, please?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I think we see this quite a bit in extractive industries, but not exclusively. The ones I know best are the ones where I've had the most discussions, and they include FPAC, the Forestry Products Association of Canada; and on the other side of the equation, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

I think the issue is not so much, as you say.... I use pipelines as an example, but—

Mr. Frank Baylis: That's a fine example.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I don't necessarily want to dwell on the pipeline issue.

If you're looking to extract resources in an area, for example, and it makes sense for the community and it makes sense for the company, and it's for the benefit of Canada, not everybody always agrees all the time with respect to how that should occur.

I think our aboriginal communities are good examples. We have lots of instances where companies have been prevented from operating on reserve territory or otherwise because they simply do not have the permission of the community to do so, and where the negotiations between the resource company and the community break down quite easily.

We see our role as providing that understanding that may help build the bridge between companies, or the government itself in terms of policy, and the communities that would resist that for whatever good reason they would have.

The the point is that we're not talking about legal issues. We're talking about intangibles, in a sense, that reflect or are derived from community sentiment or beliefs that may in some cases not even be valid. It's the kind of research we would do, and certainly people from the more technical side in the scientific or engineering areas

could help allay those concerns, or in fact lead to whatever outcome would be best for the company and the people involved.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Nuttall, you have five minutes.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): I love how much you like introducing me.

Mr. Chair, I have a couple of questions through you to the agency today.

This year, with the federal budget coming up, I would like to know how much of an increase you requested in your budget this year?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Based upon our estimates, about \$100 million over the four years. We were suggesting that we would ramp up with \$25 million in the first year, and then work towards a \$100-million increase overall.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: What percentage increase is that for you on your current budget?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I think that's about 7% for this year.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: And then a reduced percentage thereafter....

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I think the total would be maybe a little bit more than 25.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Around that. That's fine.

It says that for every dollar of funding, you get about 80¢ return on top of that, so another 80¢ is contributed through outside resources.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Does that include volunteer work, i.e., work that is not paid for?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: It includes both cash and in-kind contributions.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: What's the breakdown?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I would like to check, but I would suggest it's probably about 70:30 in-kind contributions and 30% cash.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: That's interesting. Okay.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: That would include in the case of, say, a private sector partner, the contribution of individuals who would be assigned to a project and work on behalf of a project by that company or community organization. We consider that a valid contribution. I don't want to be unclear about that.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Thank you for answering the question.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today and for their time and the work they're doing here for their country.

It's important that we remember why we're here in Parliament: to serve the Canadian people. To me, as I've said before, that means being open, transparent, and accountable. It means that committees must take the time to study important issues of the day, that we must hear from stakeholders and issue reports for the benefit of the public and guide the government. It's important that we're able to carry out our role as parliamentarians to provide oversight to the executive branch of government. That's why it was disappointing when we had the Liberal members of this committee vote against inviting Bombardier executives to come to speak with this committee to lay out their case—

The Chair: Excuse me one moment, please.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: —for why they are asking—

I have the floor, Mr. Chair.

—for help from the taxpayers of Canada and to study—

The Chair: You're speaking to a motion that has been turned down, Mr. Nuttall.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I'm not speaking to a motion. I'm giving you a preamble.

—as a committee, what we can and can't recommend for the government in regard to which actions, if any, they should take.

We know we can't bind the government here in committee, but we certainly as parliamentarians are bestowed by the people of Canada with a responsibility to offer guidance to the government. To that end, I hope that we go through the consultative process—

• (1630)

The Chair: Mr. Nuttall, I would ask you that you hold on to that thought. I would ask you that you hold on to that thought right now, please.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: —and get a social licence with this committee and that the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology extend an invitation to Porter Airlines to speak to the committee as soon as possible about what approval of the Billy Bishop airport would have meant for their business, the jobs it would have created locally, and their order of Bombardier C Series aircraft —

The Chair: If you do not stop, I will suspend this committee right now. Mr. Nuttall, this is your last warning.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Further, that they testify as to the criteria for their purchase that made the Bombardier C Series aircraft seem like the right choice for their business needs when compared with other aircraft of similar size.

I'll leave the motion on the floor, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: There is no motion. Thank you very much.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: There is. I just moved it, which is within the rules, Mr. Chair. If you look, you'll see within the rules that when I have the floor, I can move a motion. It has been so moved, and I would expect that motion to be dealt with accordingly.

The Chair: Okay. First of all, you need to submit your motion 48 hours in advance. You cannot bring new business to this. That's number one.

Number two, we've already talked about this issue. That motion has been voted down.

Number three, we are going to take a recess right now while we regroup here, because—

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Chair, just to be clear, this is a separate motion, not the same. Second of all, I am asking for unanimous consent.

The Chair: Then you would need to submit that.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I'm going to ask for unanimous consent that this committee hear this today. So I'm asking for unanimous consent from the committee.

Mr. Frank Baylis: We're not answering those questions. We're going to take the break, as you suggested, right now.

The Chair: Are you suggesting a motion?

Mr. Frank Baylis: I'm respecting your request, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Please call the vote.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Chair, you called a break, and I'm respecting that.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Okay, we'll deal with that when we get back. We'll just deal with it again.

Mr. Frank Baylis: We'll take a break, thanks.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1640)

The Chair: We are back.

As I understand it, this is a motion that you are trying to put through. As per what we all voted on at our first meeting, new business going to subcommittee requires 48 hours' notice. However, if you're seeking unanimous consent, then I will put that to a vote.

A voice: There is no consent.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I'll ask for a recorded vote on that, please.

The Chair: There is no unanimous consent, so the 48-hour rule does prevail.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Can I have some of my time back, which was interrupted?

The Chair: No, actually, your time is long overdue. We are going to move to—

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: On a point of personal parliamentary privilege, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Mr. Nuttall, you took your time to work on what you did. That time has now elapsed. As per my rule as the chair, we are now going to move on to—

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Chair, I have a point of parliamentary privilege. You have to recognize that point when I put it on the floor.

The Chair: Actually, we are going to move to the next one.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Are you saying that you're not recognizing my point of parliamentary privilege? Yes? Is that correct?

The Chair: We are going to move on to the next question.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: You're not going to recognize my point of parliamentary privilege?

Mr. Frank Baylis: I think I have the floor right now, so when you get your turn—

The Chair: I don't know what your point is.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: We actually have the right to ask questions, put motions on the floor, and speak without being interrupted for two out of the five-minute rounds. I'm not being rude. I'm not being—

Mr. Frank Baylis: That's right, and you'll be given a turn.

The Chair: Excuse me. Mr. Nuttall, we've already—

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I was interrupted for a very long period of time, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No. Listen, we've already decided from our first meeting that all future business is to go subcommittee, okay? You can keep trying to do this and we will keep doing the same thing.

We are going to move on to our next question.

Mr. Baylis.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Are you denying my parliamentary privilege?

Mr. Frank Baylis: I think I have the floor.

The Chair: We have witnesses here.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Just answer the question—

The Chair: We have witnesses here.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: I will take it that if you're not going to recognize it, then you're denying it, and we can deal with it in other ways. That's perfect. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Dan, stop talking to him. You don't have to talk to him. It's my floor. You don't have to talk to him.

The Chair: Mr. Baylis.

Mr. Frank Baylis: First of all, I would like to apologize to our guests and explain something. We have tried to put a structure in place. We think that what we've done is quite reasonable. If anybody has any new business, they can submit it in a motion, 48 hours in advance, and then we would look at it.

Clearly, not everybody thinks that's a reasonable way to progress, so unfortunately we have these outbursts, but I think we're trying to be reasonable. That's what you're seeing. Unfortunately, you're a slight victim of that.

In coming back to the business at hand, you had this "Strengthening Canada's Cultures of Innovation" report. I found that quite interesting. I know that we talked about pipelines as one area, but I won't belabour that point. If I understood it correctly, point 3 was trying to move "human thought and behaviour" towards innovation.

You gave the example of the pipeline, and I don't want to belabour that point, but where people might have negative views that impact our ability to do something, even though it's not based on science.... Can you expand on that third point? I'd like to know about that.

• (1645)

Dr. Ted Hewitt: First of all, let me say that we are here to serve the people of Canada and the Parliament of Canada, period.

On the other side of the innovation equation, one of the examples I like to give is the new technology that's developed for communication devices, smart phones, and so forth. Think about what this essentially is.

For example, I have an iPhone here. It's a very sophisticated piece of technology, but as soon as I open it up—and this is where I'm going to show you where the human element and the social sciences and humanities come in—what am I going to do?

First of all, I'm impressed by the design. It's the design that makes this such an attractive device. That design was undertaken by people who work in this field—whether they are not architects but designers, industrial designers—our discipline.

Secondly, I'm going to check my email communication. I'm going to deal with other human beings in the course of the day. I'm going to figure out what I need to do from work. I'm going to see if my family needs my help.

Thirdly, I might read a book, or I might watch a movie, or I might look at the CBC news, or the CTV news, or whatever.

That's just to say that all of those things that I will do through this piece of technology, and all the design that was undertaken to make this piece of technology sing, came from people who were trained in our disciplines, building on the highly trained, highly skilled folks in science and engineering who built it.

Mr. Frank Baylis: I'm an engineer, and I know engineers go and design something without getting the right people.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: My colleague as well, and she works for us.

Mr. Frank Baylis: There are a few of us engineers on this side here.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Absolutely. We need—

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Baylis: We understand that what you're saying is that with technologies whether it's a phone, or a pipeline, or whatever, we have to bring in a mindset of the general population, and you've had that as part of your strategic planning.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes.

Mr. Frank Baylis: How did that go? How successful have you been? Have you been able to measure that?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Remember that we are the organization that is mandated to fund the research, so what I can do is cite to you projects that have worked more on that end of the equation, or more on that end of the innovation cycle. For example my colleague David Wolfe at the University of Toronto, from the Munk School, does economic research on clusters. He's looking at whether or not clusters and incubation really help technologies sync in different sectors. He provides an absolutely critical element for us.

We have another colleague, and I'm sorry I don't remember his name—

Mr. Frank Baylis: I'd like to move back because we're looking at clusters exactly. You're saying that he's looking at the human element of how a cluster, because there's a technological aspect, helps make two plus two equal five maybe or six. Is that what I understand?

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Yes, absolutely. That's on a more macro scale. We also have a colleague—and I'm sorry, his name escapes me today—at l'Université Laval who's doing work on security and sensors, on how sensors are able to identify security threats in public places. The work that he does is within our disciplines. He uses the technology of remote sensing, but he has to apply to that a way that the camera or the system understands whether a person's actions, as monitored by the camera, constitute a threat or not. That's one of the things he's looking at.

We're also involved in projects around commercialization. We are in discussions around the appropriateness of a more open innovation platform versus a more closed model for technology transfer that's very incipient. It's coming out of some of our work in the knowledge synthesis grants. I need to be clear that we can always provide you with examples. We don't lead the research. We're trying to lead our researchers a bit in terms of the incentives to do this work, and they are.

Mr. Frank Baylis: You are trying to drive that forward. Thank you. That's excellent and critically important work.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now for the final question. Mr. Masse, you have two minutes.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you.

I want to thank the guests for being here. They answered the questions I had previously, but continuing on it would be nice—and

I would extend this to other members of the committee—to get a bit of a regional look at some of the value-added projects taking place. If possible, without causing too much work for you, maybe you could go back to some of the earlier projects that were completed, as examples, because I think it's important to remind people and taxpayers that these things are not just happening now, but have been happening in the past.

Without causing you to research this too much, it would be interesting to get that snapshot of the regional contributions. That's all.

Thank you very much for your attendance today.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: Mr. Chair, I assume we'll work through you to provide this information.

•(1650)

The Chair: Yes, please.

Dr. Ted Hewitt: I have a list here.

The other thing I would say is that we are extremely happy to be here, first of all, but extremely happy to return at any time: all of us, some of us, more of us. We never tire of telling our story.

The Chair: Let me say that it was great to have you here. You have a very interesting program that I hope has a lot of potential to continue to contribute to our growing economy and help innovation, which is exactly what we're striving for. Thank you very much.

We will suspend for five minutes.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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