

Open Letter from Manitoba Researchers To the Government of Manitoba

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Winnipeg, Manitoba

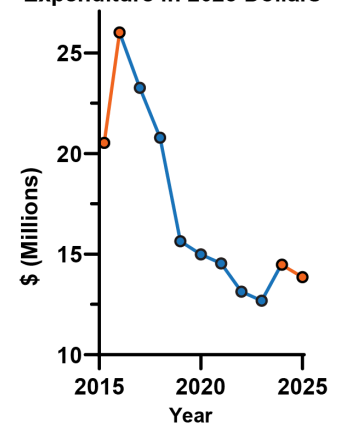
Dear Premier Kinew and Honourable Ministers,

We, the undersigned faculty members and researchers at the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and Brandon University, acknowledge the provincial government's recent announcement welcoming researchers affected by funding cuts and hostile conditions in the United States. While we commend the government's intent to attract international scientific talent, and see this as an excellent way to highlight the recent research infrastructure awarded through the Canadian Biomedical Research Fund, we must highlight the pressing need to address significant shortfalls in local research funding, which have been critically undermining Manitoba's innovation potential and training of highly qualified personnel for nearly a decade.

Manitoba currently ranks last in Canada for provincial per capita research funding—a stark reality that contradicts the government's recent enthusiasm for attracting international researchers. Adjusted for inflation, Research Manitoba's program expenditures drastically declined from \$26.02 million in 2016 to \$13 million in 2023 under the previous provincial government, a devastating reduction. While the 2025 budget proposes an additional \$100,000 to Research Manitoba, this modest increase, when adjusted for inflation and recommended increases to trainee stipends by the tri-agencies, actually represents a continued erosion of our research funding capacity.

Research Manitoba supports and strengthens a broad spectrum of research activity across the province, including health (human and veterinary biomedical research), natural and social sciences, engineering, and the humanities. Each of these areas plays a vital role in advancing knowledge, addressing local and global challenges, and enriching the cultural and intellectual fabric of our communities. From improving health outcomes and informing public policy to enhancing education, protecting ecosystems, and driving innovation in technology and engineering, the impact of this research is far-reaching. In agriculture, for example, research helps increase crop yields, protect against pests and climate change, and ensure a stable food supply for Manitobans and beyond. This diversity is one of our province's greatest strengths, and continued investment across all disciplines ensures a balanced and resilient research ecosystem that benefits everyone.

Research Manitoba Program Expenditure in 2025 Dollars



Source: RM Annual Reports adjusted for CPI.

Despite these funding challenges, Manitoba researchers continue to excel. For example, the University of Manitoba ranked 8th in research output among Canada's U15 universities. This success has been achieved despite significant disadvantages, including compensation levels that were, until recently, the lowest among their peers nationwide. Imagine what could be accomplished—and the talent we could attract and retain—if adequate provincial research support were restored. It's important to recognize that Manitoba universities are already home to researchers who are internationally regarded as experts and leaders in their fields. These individuals attract competitive national and international grants and train the next generation of researchers. However, there is an ongoing battle to retain the exceptional talent already here.

Furthermore, recent developments such as the federally funded National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg discontinuing funding for critical community health programs threaten approximately 250 specialized biomedical positions. Many professionals relocated to Manitoba specifically for these opportunities; without immediate intervention, we risk losing their expertise to other provinces or countries.

Research is care, and investment in research is essential to strengthening Manitoba's healthcare system. Medical research directly translates into improved patient care, equipping healthcare professionals with advanced skills and up-to-date knowledge necessary for accurate diagnoses, innovative treatments, and efficient management of health conditions. Stable funding ensures we can effectively educate, attract, and retain doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other essential healthcare providers, thereby safeguarding the quality and sustainability of healthcare delivery throughout our province. **The healthcare treatments of tomorrow start with the research discoveries of today.** Without sustained support, we jeopardize not only the health outcomes of future patients but also the stability of our healthcare system and the broader economic well-being of our province.

The new economy is fundamentally an innovation economy, one where knowledge, entrepreneurship, research, technology, and collaboration are the key drivers of economic growth. Manitoba possesses a significant and growing number of highly educated individuals, yet this valuable resource remains notably underutilized. By investing adequately in research and innovation, we can establish a robust innovation economy, creating lucrative, prosperous jobs and industries where science, technology, and research become the primary engines driving Manitoba's growth.

While welcoming U.S. academics could be a historic opportunity to expand Manitoba's research potential, significant research investments are still required to realize that potential. Rather than diverting limited resources to new initiatives that may not address the root problems, we urge the provincial government to prioritize restoring and significantly expanding funding for Research Manitoba to secure the future of local scientific talent and innovation.

Investment in research is not merely an expense but a strategic opportunity, **returning at least four dollars for every dollar invested.** Our bioscience and pharmaceutical sectors have proven this, generating over \$2.5 billion annually in medication exports. With the global biopharmaceuticals market projected to exceed \$1 trillion CAD by 2030, Manitoba stands at a

pivotal crossroads. Our capacity to lead this growth is directly tied to meaningful, sustained research infrastructure and personnel funding.

As the province moves forward with its essential efforts to recruit new researchers, we recognize that this growth will require increased and sustained support for the expanding needs of Manitoba's research ecosystem. More faculty will mean more students, more research infrastructure, and more active laboratories. To truly capitalize on this recruitment momentum, we must also ensure there are adequate resources to support these critical components of a thriving research environment.

Premier Kinew and Honourable Ministers, your call to American researchers presents an exciting opportunity to elevate Manitoba's research capacity. To truly seize this moment, we respectfully urge the government to back this call with a bold commitment to a multi-year plan that restores Research Manitoba's budget to at least 2016 levels, adjusted for inflation, and sets a clear path toward national leadership in research investment. This will ensure Manitoba becomes a thriving hub of innovation, capable of attracting and keeping top-tier talent globally while robustly supporting our exceptional local researchers that benefit all Manitobans.

When we invest in research, we invest in Manitoba's future.

The views expressed in this letter reflect those of the undersigned and not necessarily their institutions.

Respectfully,

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