

Canadian Government Seeks Input for Innovators Agenda

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In September 2015 a new government was elected in Canada, on a platform of significant change. Its first budget, tabled last March, outlines its plan for implementation of that change. A significant part of the budget – upwards of three billion Canadian dollars – is committed to the encouragement of innovation. Specific initiatives include:

- \$2 billion CAD over two years, beginning 2017-2018, to establish a Low Carbon Economy Fund, which will support provincial and territorial actions to reduce greenhouse emissions.
- \$800 million CAD over four years to support the development of innovation networks and regional clusters, including support for the Industrial Research Assistance Program.
- \$1 billion CAD over four years, beginning 2017-2018, to enable the Sustainable Development Technology Fund to support the development and demonstration of new technologies that address climate change, air quality, clean water, and clean soil.
- Expansion of accelerated Capital Cost Allowance tax provisions to include clean vehicle and energy storage technologies such as electric car charging stations.
- New commitments to accelerator growth services, particularly through the six Regional Development Agencies.
- A commitment to broadly inclusive support for First Nations and Aboriginal initiatives, women, and others who are traditionally left out of innovation and development cycles.

Most details of the manner in which that money is to be spent, however, are yet to be decided.

As a first step in the decision process, on June 15, the government issued an urgent call to action to all businesses, researchers, academics, and other interested parties to assist the government in understanding how its plan can most effectively be implemented. The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, said that the government's first steps will include establishment of a dedicated Innovation website and hosting of a series of roundtable discussions by a group of 'respected leaders' who are described as innovators in their own right.

It is expected that the government will also solicit the public to provide statements and presentations directly to ministers and members of Parliament prior to the enactment of specific laws.

Given the very public nature of the government's commitment, the government is likely to be held to honor it faithfully. Companies, industry associations, researchers, and others affected by innovative technology sectors should consider making thoughtful, well-planned responses comprising specific suggestions as to how to help their businesses and industries thrive.

Specific examples of projects likely to find responsive ears in government include:

- Development and implementation of micro-grid technologies
- Drinking and wastewater treatment and supply
- Waste disposal and development of recyclable products
- Reduction of carbon emissions
- Renewable energy

Innovation and Science Minister Bains expressed a particular interest in feedback concerning:

- the right types of models to be used in building innovation clusters
- ways to overcome barriers to participation by Canadian companies in North American and global supply chains
- ways in which Canada can make it easier for established companies, from start-ups to larger organizations, to scale up – with a specific objective, among others, of doubling the number of Canadian billion-dollar companies during the four-year budget forecast
- market-based approaches to encourage wider adoption of clean technologies in the private sector
- the future of digital infrastructure in Canada, and ways to develop Canada's digital technology base
- ways in which regulations can be used to drive innovation in key technology sectors
- new ways to improve government support services for business

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