

# Impact of student funds and fellowships on climate change research and human well-being

---

[openaccessgovernment.org/article/impact-of-student-funds-and-fellowships-on-climate-change-research-and-human-well-being/182356](https://openaccessgovernment.org/article/impact-of-student-funds-and-fellowships-on-climate-change-research-and-human-well-being/182356)

17 September 2024

## **Sophie Farmani, Assistant Professor, Arts, Communications and Social Sciences Department, at the University Canada West, charts the positive impact of student funds and fellowships on climate change research and human well-being in the Canadian context**

---

With the rising complexity and prevalence of global challenges and their impact on society, it is more crucial than ever for social sciences, alongside technological advancements, to actively get involved in improving human well-being. Among the countries with a focus on research and innovation, Canada's dedication and contributions to research surrounding climate change are noteworthy.

It goes without saying that the financial investments and incentives by the governments help find talent in research, which ultimately can better equip the country, as well as the world, in addressing the challenges and guiding the decisions made in various sectors (Imagining Canada's future, n.d.). While already active in supporting research in human sciences and other domains, it was back in 2018 that Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) formed a partnership with Policy Horizons Canada to identify and filter out a list of 16 future global challenges that will have a notable impact on Canada.

Following that, several action plans were developed that focused on a selected set of topics within a specific time frame. As such, the focus for the 2018-21 action plan was areas such as circular economy, emerging asocial society, and work in the digital economy; the 2022-25 action plan encourages research on Global Health and Wellness for the 21st Century, Marginalization and governance systems.

The action plan for 2025-27 also lists topics that address the changing nature of security and conflict, the arts transformed, and truth under fire in a post-fact world (Imagining Canada's future, n.d.). This targeted focus has led to many initiatives and research projects that have helped policy formations and improvements as well as guided action in addressing global challenges.

### **Student funds and fellowships: SSHRC-funded projects and initiatives**

---

The available evidence briefs on the SSHRC website further provide detailed insights into the nature of the funded projects and initiatives with a focus on each of these challenge areas. One such output incentivized and funded by this award is the work of Ekaterina Rhodes from the University of Victoria. As the Principal Investigator, she worked on

improving climate policy projections with a focus on a pan-Canadian review of energy-economy models, contributing to policy improvements in Canada's commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to net zero by 2050 (Improving climate policy projections, n.d.).

Another such notable output is the project undertaken by Geoffrey McCarney, Assistant Professor at the University of Ottawa, on the planetary boundaries, global material demand and the emerging circular economy focused on the implications for upstream resource producers and primary material exporters (Planetary boundaries, global material, n.d.).

As a further attestation to its investments in research and innovation in various areas, including humanities and global challenges, Canada recently had a noteworthy increase in its 2024 budget, which equals \$3.5 billion, as announced by the Ministry of Finance (Budget, 2024).

In addition, starting September 1, 2024, student scholarships for graduate studies will be increased to \$27,000 for Master's, \$40,000 for Doctorate, and \$70,000 for postdoctoral fellowships. This is the first time in two decades that these scholarships have seen such a significant increase (Liddle, 2024). For example, the previous SSHRC doctoral fellowship was valued at \$20,000, which is now being increased by 100%.

While there are several federally funded projects and research conducted by universities across the country, it is worth mentioning that one such university, the University of British Columbia (UBC), has once again been ranked as a global leader in sustainability efforts (Lee, 2022) and placed at the 13th overall ranking out of more than 1,400 institutions in the 2022 Times Higher Education impact ranking for institutional efforts to advance the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDG). There have also been significant advancements by the university's researchers in applying knowledge through building companies to combat climate change that has even received funding and recognition from the Musk Foundation and XPRIZE, as stated by UBC President Prof. Santa J. Ono (Lee, 2022).

## **Humanities research and encouraging multidisciplinary innovations**

---

Finally, while Canada is still behind the United States in terms of funding scales, it seems to provide a uniform approach in supporting targeted climate solutions through policymaking informed by research in humanities and encouraging multidisciplinary innovations. The author believes that the solution to global change is global governance and partnerships; incremental and geographically bound measures and innovations will need to be circulated throughout the globe to have indeed an impact on a challenge that is threatening all and beyond boundaries.

## **References**

---

- Budget 2024: Supporting the next generation of researchers and innovators. (2024, May 1). Government of Canada. [Budget 2024: Supporting the Next Generation of Researchers and Innovators – Canada.ca](#)
- Imagining Canada's future. (n.d.) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. [Imagining Canada's Future \(sshrc-crsh.gc.ca\)](#)
- Improving climate policy projections: [A pan-Canadian review of energy-economy models. \(n.d.\). Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.](#)
- Lee, L.X (2022, April 6). [UBC strengthens track record as global sustainability leader. University of British Columbia.](#)
- Liddle, H. (2024, April 17). [Graduate student scholarships to increase for the first time in two decades in research-heavy federal budget. University Affairs.](#)
- [Planetary boundaries, global material demand and the emerging circular economy: Implications for upstream resource producers and primary material exporters. \(n.d.\). Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.](#)