

**DR. CHAD GAFFIELD**  
**SPEECH TO THE CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO**  
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Thank you so much for that warm and generous introduction, and many thanks to Helen Burstyn, the President of the Canadian Club of Toronto, and to the entire Board of Directors for inviting me to speak today.

Je suis tout à fait conscient de la manière dont le Canadian Club est convaincu que les connaissances d'hier et d'aujourd'hui sont essentiels pour bâtir des communautés plus soudées, des pays plus florissants et, au bout du compte, un monde meilleur. Cette conviction définit la nature du Canadian Club depuis sa création et se trouve au cœur des sciences humaines.

I deeply appreciate the Canadian Club's conviction that knowledge and understanding of the past and present are prerequisites for building stronger communities, stronger countries, and a better world.

This conviction has defined the Canadian Club throughout its history, and it is certainly at the heart of the humanities and social sciences. Through research fields from History to Philosophy and Literature; from Psychology to Sociology and Economics; from Law to Business and Education, our students and scholars advance knowledge and understanding about individuals, institutions and societies in the past and present - and with a view toward the future. For this reason, I feel privileged to have the chance to speak with you here today and to become part of the history of such a great Canadian institution.

This year, we are celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council - SSHRC, as it has come to be known. Celebrating our pearl anniversary; three decades of cultivating pearls of wisdom!

I'd like to give a special thanks to colleagues and partners for joining us here this afternoon including:

- Tom Kierans, Chair of our governing council;
- Angela Ferrante, another one of our council members;

- Claire Morris, the President of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada,
- The Honourable Jim Wilkinson, Ontario's Minister of Research and Innovation,
- the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, and,
- two of the most generous and committed philanthropists for the social sciences and humanities, the Honourable Hal Jackman and "Red" Wilson; we deeply appreciate your support.

And many thanks to all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules. It is wonderful to see high school students with here today. Seeing you makes me think of the saying that 'We inherit the world from our ancestors but we borrow it from our descendents.' Thank you so much for attending.

I am here to share my conviction that a new consensus is emerging in democratic societies around the world about how to build a successful future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The fabric of this consensus is being woven with multiple strands. These strands are composed of new views of research and learning, and how these activities can help us address the key questions of our changing times. The strength of the fabric promises to support prosperous and sustainable economies, diverse cultures, robust democratic institutions and safe, just civil societies.

My specific focus is on the expanding role being given to, and being played by, the social sciences and humanities. Metaphorically-speaking, the humanities and social sciences are moving to centre stage - shoulder-to-shoulder as I like to say - with the natural and health sciences and engineering.

The key questions at the heart of the social sciences and humanities have become a focus of attention in public debate: who we are, where we have been, and where we might go, as individuals and societies. My sense is that this new recognition reflects deep conceptual changes that have begun defining the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a new era. Why is a new consensus now emerging about how societies can best succeed in the globalizing 21<sup>st</sup> century? How have the humanities and social sciences moved to centre stage?

To begin with, let's consider three changes that characterize our era:

- a new recognition of complexity;
- a new embracing of diversity;
- and a new emphasis on creativity.

Not that long ago, an individual's talent and prospects in life were often officially defined by the results of a single test that resulted in a single number - the famous IQ test. Today, no one would make such a claim.

No advertising firm now targets the "average man" or the "normal shopper" as they did until recent decades. Rather, each individual is now recognized to include complex cognitive, emotional and psychological qualities that defy simple labeling. For example, Abninder Litt from the University of Waterloo, the winner of SSHRC's highest honour for doctoral students last year, is now at Stanford University researching new approaches to marketing that focus on individual consumer decisions.

Beyond recognition of the complexity of each individual is a new appreciation of how the differences among humans are expressed differently depending on their context. Albert Einstein taught us that particles interact differently according to time and place. For their part, scholars in the social sciences and humanities now emphasize how the unique and defining features of individual humans make our interactions with each other infinitely more complex.

Our research projects show that the itinerary of our lives is often multi-causal and non-linear reflecting both individual differences and group dynamics.

And the communications revolution is making our interactions more and more complex as predicted first, I believe, by one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's great thinkers, Harold Innis. It was Innis whose perception of the social implications of time-bending and space-bending communications media, inspired Marshall McLuhan and others who have helped us - and the world - begin to come to grips with the digital age.

The challenge of analyzing, interpreting, and understanding humans is truly 'hard'; we now know that there is nothing "soft" about the social sciences and humanities.

Along with recognizing complexity, we are also embracing diversity. Until recently, the dominant metaphor for imagining a society was a cookie cutter. For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a successful country was seen to need a homogenous population, and public policies tried to impose a one-size-fits-all standard for behaviour and identity. Diversity was defined as a problem to be solved.

In contrast, researchers have now taught us that all societies have multiple origins, multiple identities depending on who is defining them and what criteria are being used. We now recognize that no single perspective can hold all the answers. Societies around the world now deeply regret the oppressive efforts of past decades to make everyone conform to the dominant culture. Not only is the pursuit of uniformity now seen to be misguided but we realize that sameness can lead to weakness and even vulnerability while diversity can strengthen. No one now wants to put all their eggs in one basket. And no one wants all their eggs to hatch a single mindset.

In other words, the humanities and social sciences make clear that globalization should not be viewed as westernization; rather globalization holds the promise of an internationalization in which diverse individuals and societies interact with other diverse individuals and societies.

From this perspective, globalization need not threaten the best of western culture but rather can enrich it. Globalization can enhance our ability to ask and address questions that concern all of humanity.

At the same time, scholars have made clear that to embrace diversity is not to welcome every perspective as valid. Rather, we must confront consciously and publicly the evidence that supports each perspective. And we must address philosophical, moral and ethical questions in ways that reflect and are informed by the best that our top minds have to offer.

And scholars in Canada have certainly been helping the world come to grips with such questions including Charles Taylor, SSHRC's first Gold Medal winner. Canadian scholars such as Taylor are showing the world how we can benefit from diversity through robust democratic cultures and institutions. No longer is the goal simply to tolerate each other - we now seek to engage each other.

Along with the new recognition of complexity, and the embracing of diversity, a new emphasis on creativity is emerging as a defining feature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century - especially in terms of material well-being. Researchers are now emphasizing how the new economy is redefining the type of knowledge and competencies that are important for economic growth. The creators, big-picture thinkers, empathizers are becoming the new Most Valuable Players on business teams. This deep change explains the new importance of combining so-called right-brain thinking with left-brain thinking as described by best-selling author Daniel Pink - simultaneous, metaphorical, aesthetic, contextual, and synthetic.

The work opportunities that are now increasingly important include those activities that can't be repeated routinely, such as design, marketing, managing, and communicating effectively to diverse audiences. The competitive global labour market now seeks those who can combine established knowledge and understanding with independent analysis, new ideas and articulate expression.

As is usually the case, students have quickly reacted to the new emphasis on creativity and Canadian institutions are adapting rapidly as are others in the leading countries. In the United States, twenty universities offered graduate programs in fine arts in the 1980s. Today, some 250 U.S. universities have established creative Master of Fine Arts programs.

Despite such rapid growth, student demand is still far in front of supply. At Harvard, it is now three times harder to gain admission to their Master of Fine Arts program than to their MBA program. And MFA grads are being snapped up by companies eager to succeed in the new economy. More Americans today work in arts, entertainment, and design than work as lawyers, accountants, and auditors, which themselves are, of course, key jobs informed by the social sciences and humanities.

A similar story is unfolding in Canada. As is often the case, Canadian institutions are at the leading edge of such innovations especially those combining academic programs on the creative industries and the new technologies.

These examples illustrate the rapidly changing and dynamic ways in which the new emphasis on creativity helps explain the continuing blossoming of the social

sciences and humanities, research fields that foster and develop students who understand meaning and can interrelate complex pieces to make informed decisions.

Northrop Frye insisted that true learning did not involve the filling of a pail but rather the lighting of a fire. Since this insistence is at the heart of all the social sciences and humanities at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, it is not surprising that our graduates contribute in so many ways to the new economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The marketplace of ideas has become the marketplace that really matters.

It is in this sense that our research fields help prepare students for jobs...not just for their next job but for every job they will ever have...

But exactly how important have these economic contributions become? What is the place of the social sciences and humanities in the new economic realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

A major challenge in addressing this question is the need to rethink and update the categories and measures that were developed to track economic changes during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This work is now beginning. One preliminary study by Ron Freedman of [The Impact Group](#), suggests that industries based on social sciences and humanities inputs now account for more than 75 per cent of total employment in Canada.... That's three quarters of all jobs which involve activities that are studied and informed by our research fields. Overall, this initial estimate suggests that social sciences and humanities research now influences nearly \$400 billion of economic activity in Canada - an amount roughly equivalent to industries that rely on science, technology, engineering and medicine.

Taken together, the new recognition of complexity, the embracing of diversity and the new emphasis on creativity help explain why the social sciences and humanities has been moved to centre stage in our efforts to build stronger communities and a better world.

But what specific events and concerns have been making clear the connection between the changing world and the increased role being assigned to, and

played by, the social sciences and humanities? How exactly are these research fields moving to centre stage?

One part of the answer to this question involves a greatly increased desire to understand the *entire* world, past and present.

For example, a number of Canadian universities had developed world-class expertise in Islamic Studies by the time of September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001. On that day, some people might have wondered why that expertise was so important. But the next day, it became clear to everyone. Scholars of history, religious and cultural studies became key figures in public debate and policy discussion after 9-11. As the saying goes, the afternoon knows what the morning never suspected. But our research community was prepared.

In similar ways, the social sciences and humanities have made special efforts to contribute to knowledge and understanding of pressing *social* issues.

For example, scholars in the early 1980s focused on Canada's aging population. Their research began informing public debate about the viability of pension plans, compulsory retirement, the care of the elderly, and numerous other topics. The impact of their research has been significant. Overall, Canada is becoming an older society much more smoothly than most observers predicted twenty-five years ago.

Pension plans have not all gone bankrupt (at least not yet), retirement legislation has been changed, and much more appropriate strategies are being pursued to care for the elderly.

In addition to cultural and social issues, the humanities and social sciences are now also contributing to what were once considered strictly bio-medical challenges. And here again, Canada has played a leading role.

In the 1970s, the medical school at McMaster University revamped the admissions criteria and the curriculum to encompass a people-centered, interdisciplinary, and problem-based approach to health. Today, the incoming class at McMaster's DeGroot School of Medicine includes students who have majored in Music, Accounting, History and other programs in the social sciences and humanities.

This approach has become familiar in universities across Canada and around the world.

And students in medical schools now often take courses in “narrative medicine”, where they learn how to benefit diagnostically from skillful literary analysis of a patient’s story. Until recently, few medical schools anywhere in the world offered humanities courses. Today, three out of four do so in the United States, many of them inspired by the Canadian precedent.

New research in our fields is also guiding decisions related to what was once considered solely technological topics such as how to store and retrieve digital records. Canadian scholars are leading interdisciplinary, international efforts to create guidelines and standards for digital records, and their recommendations are being implemented by governments, industry and the makers of technology around the world.

For example, Luciana Duranti teaches archival science to graduate students while leading an international research initiative to develop a global standard for protecting the integrity and authenticity of electronic records. To date, she and her colleagues have helped prepare more than 200 students for successful careers with organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations, the European Parliament, and CNN.

Similarly, scholars are now focusing on the human dimension of the environment both in specialized and interdisciplinary initiatives. Scholars are redefining the environment as an integrated space determined by both human and natural forces.

Our effort to reconnect C.P. Snow’s two solitudes of arts and science is still a work in progress but no one would now describe their isolation as a good thing. Rather, scholars across research fields are now helping us, the public and policy-makers, gain a better understanding of the complex economic, social, cultural and technological forces that shape—and are shaped by—global environmental changes.

Taken together, the multiple implications of complexity, diversity and creativity help explain the increased recognition for - and heightened expectation of - the

social sciences and humanities. We are embracing these disciplines and interdisciplinary fields as intrinsically valuable and as effective ways to achieve prosperity, sustainable economies and societies, and enhanced quality of life. .

Let me also emphasize that, in undertaking these research activities, scholars are contributing in the spirit of the new competitiveness of the globalizing 21<sup>st</sup> century. This new competitiveness includes two distinguishing characteristics.

First, we are redefining the character of competition. Rather than viewing competition as win-lose, the new approach seeks win-win engagement through collaboration. From the perspective of the new competitiveness, the desirable future will not follow a contest to determine superiority among societies in a zero-sum game but rather will follow a win-win effort to enhance all societies.

One example of this distinguishing feature is the sea change now underway in how we imagine and manage intellectual property. Rather than attempting to hoard IP, the new focus is on managing intellectual property in ways that stimulate innovation and foster creativity for the benefit of the world's population.

The new IP era, as perceived by Richard Gold and his colleagues, emphasizes cooperation and collaboration across the private and public sectors - among researchers, companies, governments. The key question in the new competitiveness is how to partner - how to share knowledge appropriately for the good of all.

The second distinguishing feature of the new competitiveness is the increased effort and resources needed to succeed on the world stage. The most familiar metaphors for this new feature come from sports. We hear about the global race for talent, and of the fact that the bar has been raised for productivity.

The same imagery applies to the Canadian tradition of competition for research funding. Our grant competitions welcome all comers into a true meritocracy. The ranking and selection is evidence-based with comprehensive evaluation by non-partisan experts. Everyone knows that being good is not good enough.

This past summer, for example, Professor Renée Guimond-Plourde remembered achieving a Ph.D. in terms of completing an "intellectual marathon" while the

new announcement of her winning a SSHRC grant made her feel like she had been named to the Olympic team for her research discipline.

This sentiment is certainly understandable. SSHRC supports the top 9,000 of the 71,000 humanities and social sciences researchers and graduate students that occupy more than half of our campuses. A recent study placed Canada in the top 3 countries in the world for scholarly publications in the social sciences. Another study of all the disciplines showed that Canada produces about 4.5% of the world's total number of scholarly journal articles in all fields. For the social sciences in particular, Canada's proportion is 5.5%. For the humanities, Canada's proportion is 6.0%.

In other words, Canada's scholars in the social sciences and humanities punch well above their weight.

And, in keeping with the new era, these scholars are joining together, and collaborating with diverse partners to advance knowledge and contribute to society. That is why we at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council help scholars build alliances between the campus and the larger community. For the past 10 years, for example, our Community/University Research Alliances program has supported partnerships between university-based researchers and community based organizations. CURA's, as they are now widely-known internationally, have goals that go beyond research to promote knowledge mobilization for the benefit of the larger society - and to enhance the quality of research and learning.

All the universities represented here today are splendid examples of how campuses are now connecting to their larger communities. In the Toronto area, for example, scholars at Ryerson University and their community partners are studying how to make entertainment more accessible to those with special needs. Their work analyses how enhanced closed captioning and new communication technologies can extend the inclusiveness of film, theater and television.

And scholars at York University are collaborating with community partners in undertaking research on the human rights of people with disabilities in Canada.

At the University of Toronto, a campus-community research initiative is focused on the challenge of building more inclusive neighborhoods from within Toronto's West-Central area.

In similar ways, OCAD University's Digital Futures Initiative is connecting design research to the digital industry.

For many years, business leaders have been generous donors to business schools across Canada. Recently, they have begun increasing and expanding philanthropy to other fields of the social sciences and humanities.

Hal Jackman has focused his enthusiastic support on the humanities at the University of Toronto which has enabled the creation of an interdisciplinary Institute under the leadership of Robert Gibbs, an acclaimed philosopher.

More recently, Jim Balsillie announced a transformative grant of \$100 million to create the Balsillie School of International Affairs involving the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and the Centre for International Governance and Innovation. Such initiatives are now helping the social sciences and humanities realize their full potential as contributors to Canada and the world.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that we should not be surprised that the humanities and social sciences in Canada are well-positioned to help us succeed in a world of complexity, diversity and creativity. The story of Canada is one of multiple cultures, languages, experiences and perspectives, and, as Canadians, we address complexity and diversity everyday.

And Canada has historically invested in the creativity, the intellectual assets of the entire population. Yes, we have been, to repeat a well-known expression, successful "Hewers of Wood, Drawers of Water", but we have also been deeply committed to developing our human capital.

In the nineteenth-century, public schooling helped Canada become one of the most literate societies in the world. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, public universities spread from coast to coast and have produced graduates whose diplomas are recognized internationally as first rate.

In my own case, I consider myself profoundly fortunate to have received an undergraduate and graduate education in our public universities. I know that my story is characteristic of thousands of us including so many of you here today, and it says something important about Canada.

And since the 1960s and 1970s, we have built a made-in-Canada curriculum for elementary and high schools, and have provided support for unprecedented research intensity in Canadian universities. Together with related developments both on and beyond the campus, Canada has developed a distinctiveness that is praised internationally.

In other words, the story of Canada is the story of complex, diverse and creative people - of a country that was thereby able to blossom during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I think the evidence is now clear that Canada's success thus far has been enabled by investing in people, intellectual assets, human capital - the best natural resource - AND by investing in understanding who we are, where we have been and where we might go.

One key result is that we demand quality...genuine quality for our businesses, our neighbourhoods, our communities. We are demanding of the type of society we want to live in. We are demanding of each other, we engage each other, we demand the best of each other, though not at the expense of each other. In other words, Canadians are well-positioned to draw on the past and present to face the future.

It is for all these reasons and many more that the social sciences and humanities are now moving to centre stage; helping us build a world of prosperous and sustainable economies, diverse and strong cultures, robust democratic institutions and safe, just civil societies.

By working together across campuses, communities and internationally, we can ensure that our descendents will look back on us as the founders of successful societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thank you so much for your attention.