

Response to the Review by the Sussex Circle

To the Minister of Industry,
Government of Canada

We are pleased to send you the independent Review of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation undertaken by the Sussex Circle, which was submitted to the Foundation's Board in April 2013.

The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation was established in 2001 by the friends and family of Pierre Trudeau, and in 2002, was given an endowment of 125 million dollars by the Government of Canada so that it could develop into a world-class program for advanced studies in the social sciences and humanities.

Each year, the Foundation solicits a detailed independent audit of its financial performance. In addition, it ensures that the annual business plan is being achieved, that appropriate fiscal controls and accountability measures are in place and effective, that goals and objectives are clearly stated and progress toward those goals is being made, and finally, that high standards for documentation, due process, and transparency are being upheld.

In accordance with our obligations under the Funding Agreement, every five-years an external review is commissioned, which is intended to serve a more strategic function: to consider the broader issue of maintaining the relevance of our purpose, to evaluate and measure our success in achieving that purpose, and to make recommendations for adjustments and improvements to our program so that wight better meet our objectives in the future. Such reviews were conducted in 2005 and 2009, and the results along with a Response to the findings by the Foundation were transmitted to the Government of Canada. In 2012 the Board of Directors engaged Sussex Circle to undertake a comprehensive review of the Foundation's programs, the results of which were presented to the Board of Directors at its April 2013 meeting.

The Sussex Circle Report, dated June 28, 2013 is herewith being presented to the Government along with the Foundation's response to the Recommendations made by the evaluation team. This response was discussed by Directors at the meeting of the Foundation Board held November 21, 2013.

Respectfully,

Tim Brodhead
Interim President

John McCall MacBain
Chair of the Board of Directors

Montreal, the 10th day of December 2013

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Recommendation 1

“The Foundation occupies a unique niche within the social sciences and humanities research community. Although the context for the Foundation’s programs has changed since 2001, we recommend that all four programs be continued.”

Response: We are pleased that the near-unanimous view of the people interviewed by the independent review team is that the Foundation’s program occupies a unique space and is of benefit to Canada, and that this judgment is shared by the reviewers. Since the creation of the Foundation in 2001 the federal government has emphasized the role of research in creating a dynamic, innovative, and competitive national economy and has invested significant resources to build a world-class research environment in Canada.

In its first decade the Foundation supported 157 Scholars (of whom almost 100 have obtained their doctoral degrees to date), fifty Fellows and ninety Mentors. The numbers of nominations for these highly prized awards continues to grow and to attract outstanding candidates: in each of the past few years, the Foundation has received approximately 250 nominations for 15 Scholarships (14 in 2013), 100 nominations for 4 Fellowships, and 200 nominations for 10 Mentorships.

Participants in our programs are helped to disseminate the results of their research with funding for travel to conferences and public events, by the publication of the Trudeau Foundation Papers, and by interaction with broader networks through the mentors, and the Public Interaction Program.

Recommendation 2

“The Board and the President will need to continue to consider carefully what shape and scale of activities is sustainable over the medium- and longer-term, bearing in mind expected returns on the Foundation’s investments and on fundraising opportunities, and what level of programming is appropriate to achieve the mission and enhance the profile of the Foundation. Sustaining an active, credible and visible program should be a priority for the Board and for management.”

Response: The Funding Agreement between the Foundation and the federal government mandates the Foundation to preserve its capital, financing its operations from interest earned by the endowment. The Agreement limits the investments to low-risk investments such as government bonds or their equivalent. Since 2008, interest rates have been exceptionally low, constraining the Foundation’s income to the point where it is forced to either cut program activities or eat into the capital.

In response to this situation the Foundation Board, under the leadership of the Chair, is now actively planning a fund-raising campaign. It is aware that raising private resources is intensely competitive, but views this as imperative to sustain the Foundation on the terms established by Article 4.01 of the Funding Agreement (“This endowment must be capitalized in perpetuity in the Fund, where only the income of the endowment is to be used for the purposes of the Fund”).

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In addition to seeking private funds, the Foundation has taken steps to leverage its outreach through partnerships with Canadian institutions and through relationships that have been established in London with Goodenough College, and in France with the Centre Jacques Cartier and the Institut des Sciences de l'Homme to increase the Foundation's international profile and to provide opportunities for Scholars, Mentors and Fellows to interact with their colleagues and other networks abroad.

Recommendation 3

"Bearing in mind that the purpose of mentoring is to broaden the perspective of the Scholars, the Foundation should take steps to build an early understanding among Mentors and Scholars of the purposes of the Mentoring Program and should treat the Mentors as a shared resource for the Trudeau community."

Response: The Mentorship Program is one of the unique features of the Foundation, and is particularly valued by Scholars as it broadens their perspectives and allows for their direct engagement with eminent Canadians from the public service, business, professions, arts and culture, and not-for-profit sectors. Over the years the Foundation has become more adept at selecting, orienting and matching Mentors to particular Scholars. The Mentor-Scholar Retreat, held in February of each year, gives mentors and scholars a first opportunity for face-to-face contact. Mutual expectations are clarified, and plans for on-going interaction made. A separate session brings present and future Mentors together to discuss ways that mentors can best support and assist the Scholars, based on experience. The Foundation emphasizes that Mentors are not intended to act as yet another source of academic guidance, but rather to use their experience, networks, and counsel to link Scholars to the world of practitioners, to orient them to real-world challenges, and to people who are high achievers in Canadian society. For this reason too, the Foundation deliberately selects a diversity of Mentors, including people who are pre-eminent in public service, business, the arts, and community organizations. Starting in 2014, the Foundation will conduct a parallel session for scholars only, during which Trudeau scholars who have already worked with a Trudeau mentor counsel new scholars on ways to make the most of the mentorship relationship. At both sessions, Foundation Management will stress that mentors are to be considered a shared resource for the Trudeau community – not just a personal resource for the scholar or scholars to whom the mentor has been assigned.

Recommendation 4

"As part of the Fellowship selection process, the Foundation should invite proposals from potential recipients on how they would use the award. The objective should be to allow the selection jury to assure itself that its investment of Fellowship dollars will generate new work, enhance intergenerational learning and support the broader mission of the Foundation."

Response: The Foundation Board and staff are constantly seeking recommendations to improve the quality of the Foundation's programs and to expand its outreach. A Board Committee to explore ways of strengthening the Fellowship Program, in particular, was created in 2012 and has made several suggestions. Pursuant to these suggestions, the 2014

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competition, which will lead to the Board's appointment of four new Fellows and is already underway, requires that potential recipients propose a project to be undertaken during the period of their Fellowship that engages the Foundation's community of scholars, mentors, and other fellows. This change ensures that the fellowship is not awarded "out of the blue" and that potential recipients are aware that accepting a Trudeau fellowship commits them to participating in the life of the Trudeau Foundation community. The selection jury will consider these project proposals when selecting a potential recipients for recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Recommendation 5

"To extend its reach and impact, the Foundation should consider increasing its investment in the Public Interaction Program to broaden the spectrum of Canadians who are exposed to the Trudeau community and its work."

Response: The very low rate of return on the Foundation's assets in the current investment climate makes it challenging to expand our outreach activities through the Public Participation Program at this time. However, this remains a priority and within our present means we are constantly seeking to engage more Canadians in presentations by Trudeau Scholars and Fellows. In recent years, Trudeau Fellows have delivered major public lectures at host universities from Charlottetown to Victoria. The affiliations in Europe are designed to increase the international scale of the Foundation's reach, promoting the integration of Scholars into global networks and spreading awareness of Canadian research capacity.

In addition, the Foundation has redesigned its website to be more useful to users and is now making much greater use of social media to disseminate research results and build its network. This is a relatively low-cost but effective way to reach larger numbers of Canadians.

Recommendation 6

"In order to reduce the operational risks associated with a small staff, as resources permit additional funding should be devoted to strengthening administrative capacity. Opportunities should be considered for using modern information technology to free up staff time for other program purposes."

Response: The Board mandated management to explore ways to use new technological capacity to streamline the Scholar, Mentor and Fellow selection processes. Steps have been taken to assess what information technologies could best meet the Foundation's needs. Limited program and administrative staff remains a potential vulnerability in the event of losing key people to illness or departure but the financial situation for now makes the hiring of additional personnel unrealistic.

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Recommendation 7

“The Board had done a good job of stewardship over the past ten years. There is a general sense that there is now a need to renew the Board with members who bring new perspectives and different experience. This is particularly important as the Foundation seeks to reach out in program terms to the wider Canadian community and in financial terms to potential contributors. In dialogue with the President, the Board should consider its broader priorities and direction for the next decade as it develops its succession plan.”

Response: The Foundation has been well served by the continuity and depth of experience of its current Board. As the terms of existing Directors end (twelve of fourteen regular Directors’ terms end in 2013), the Nominations Committee is actively seeking to achieve a balance of experience and new appointments that reflect the Foundation’s national scope and need for a diversity of perspectives and experience.