



## BRIEFING: Innovation Consultation – London, Ontario

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September 19, 2016

The Honourable Navdeep Bains  
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development  
Member of Parliament, Mississauga – Malton

Dear Minister Bains,

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you ideas on innovation and Canada's future from the perspective of my constituents. In August, my office organized an innovation roundtable with stakeholders from across London, Ontario. The key ideas put forward are as follows:

- Canada cannot expect to compete on a global scale in the digital realm unless coding is made a mandatory part of educational curriculums. Our government was encouraged to promote this change with officials at the provincial level. A related concern is that university and community colleges are also not teaching up-to-date computer science courses. As a result, employers are forced to focus and spend money on training and upgrading skills rather than concentrating on growing their businesses.
- While there is a major focus on encouraging a STEM approach in education, the arts cannot be forgotten because critical thinking is instrumental to establishing the “innovation mindset” you have spoken about. Many of the more than 300 tech companies in London, for example, have hired philosophy, history and political science graduates for top level positions for this very reason. Hence the need for STEAM, instead of STEM.
- Social innovation deserves consideration. Nonprofit organizations have the ability to produce innovative goods or services that help to create jobs while providing an important social contribution at the same time. Examples include some of the work done by Goodwill Industries and the Young Men's Christian Association. Those from this sector argued that connecting innovation and technology is warranted, but the notion of a perfect overlap is often exaggerated.
- While access to venture capital in Canada appears to be strong, this is not always the case for smaller sized cities such as London. Here, securing investment is often difficult for entrepreneurs when compared to the situation in Toronto and other major cities.
- Federal funding for incubators – Communitech in Waterloo was highlighted as an example – is vital. These help to provide a supportive, collaborative training ground and assist in the attraction and retention of young talent.



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- Federal funding that would generate collaboration between industry and postsecondary institutions is important and could yield important outcomes. Such a partnership has been difficult to attain in London because of a lack of space at the university. Building this requirement into future funding programs is worth thinking about.
- Unlike large cities, where connectivity is well established, businesses in London and other small centers have a difficult time establishing a presence in other markets because of limited airport and train services. Opportunities for growth have been lost as a result.
- Sweden, Germany and Israel do not offer significant tax credits as a way of encouraging innovation. And yet, these states lead in innovation. Canada should reconsider the utility of tax credits in light of this.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity you have provided to Members of Parliament to make you aware of the perspectives on innovation in our communities. Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Peter Fragiskatos  
Member of Parliament (MP)  
London North Centre