

Intelligence MEMOS



From: Martin Eichenbaum
To: Canadians Concerned About Prosperity
Date: May 5, 2025
Re: **TRUMP HAS GIVEN US A GENERATIONAL TALENT OPPORTUNITY. LET'S SEIZE IT.**

Canadians often complain that many of our brightest stars move south. The list of distinguished expats is long and impressive: Artists, academics, entrepreneurs, managers, athletes and more.

The phrase “brain drain” is familiar to all of us. Thanks to Donald Trump, Canada has an unprecedented opportunity to reverse the research brain drain. We should seize it.

The Canadian economy is not in good shape. Productivity growth is negative. The gap between per capita income in Canada and the United States is at its widest in nearly a century. When provincial incomes are adjusted for purchasing power, Ontario is virtually indistinguishable from Alabama – one of the poorest US states.

There are many reasons for Canada's underperformance. The long-term leakage of talent to the United States has clearly played a role. But, thanks to Mr. Trump, Canada now has a unique chance to reverse the brain drain – particularly in STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The Trump administration is suspending or clawing back research funding at elite American universities. Here's a partial list: Cornell (\$1 billion frozen), Northwestern (\$790 million frozen), Johns Hopkins (\$800 million terminated), Brown (\$520 million halted), Columbia (\$400 million suspended), Harvard (\$2.2 billion frozen) and the University of Pennsylvania (\$175 million cut). Reductions at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are further destabilizing the STEM research ecosystem. No major US research university will be spared the chaos and uncertainty.

The Trump administration says these cuts are part of its effort to combat diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and respond to antisemitism on campus. Whether or not we agree with these justifications is beside the point. What matters for Canada is that the chaos is an opening to elevate its global standing in STEM research and jump-start its struggling economy.

Scientists are passionate about their work. But passion is not enough. It needs to be coupled with stable financial support. US scientists are already looking for alternatives. Canada should move quickly and aggressively to become that alternative. The strategy is clear: Induce top-tier US-based scientists to move their labs to Canadian institutions by offering them guaranteed funding and research continuity.

What's in it for Canadians? A lot. The United States dominates high tech, bioscience and medicine because of close ties between research universities and industry. Universities do basic science that the private sector then turns into innovation and jobs. It's no accident that Silicon Valley is right next door to Stanford and Berkeley. The same applies to Cambridge, Massachusetts – home to MIT and Harvard but also a hub of biomedical entrepreneurship. Research creates high-value jobs, attracts capital and drives growth. Canada has the tools to take advantage of the opportunity the Trump administration has given it. We just need to up our ante.

This country already has world-class universities. And it supports basic STEM research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Innovation, NSERC and Science and Economic Development Canada. What we need to do now is identify displaced or vulnerable talent in the United States and – Ottawa and the provinces together – offer them multi-year funding. But there is an important condition for support: The researchers must move to Canada.

Four criteria come to mind when picking targets of opportunity. First, they are young or middle-aged. Second, they have published outstanding work in the relevant fields. Third, their work depends on multi-year government funding. Fourth, STEM researchers at Canadian universities would be excited to have these scholars as colleagues.

We need to adopt a multi-year perspective. Success breeds success. The more top researchers we bring in, the easier it becomes to attract more researchers, along with the firms and industries that will follow them.

Canada faces enormous challenges in securing its long-term prosperity. The Trump administration has given us an extraordinary opportunity. Now is the time for an elbows-up strategy to recruit the best scientists in the world. If Americans complain, tell them: This is what elbows-up competition looks like. What did you expect?

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A version of this Memo first [appeared](#) in the Financial Post.