Good afternoon, my name is John Alho, and I am the Associate Vice-President for External Relations at the University of Manitoba. I would like to start by thanking Members on behalf of Dr. Barnard, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manitoba, who sends his regrets for not being able to attend personally, for your kind invitation to appear before the Committee.

First some context - The University of Manitoba was established in 1877 as western Canada’s first university. The university serves 28,000 students, making it the largest university in Manitoba. As one of Canada’s leading research-intensive universities, it is a member of the U15 and is ranked 12th out of the top 50 research-intensive universities across Canada.

The University of Manitoba feels that a sustainable foundation for Canada’s economic recovery and growth stems from three primary areas in which the federal government should continue its investments. Those three areas are: investments in research; investments in international education, and; investments in Aboriginal higher education.

The University believes that the government should continue its investments in research, particularly by enhancing core funding for the three granting councils and the Canada Foundation for Innovation. Tri-council support is the essential pillar supporting research activity at Canada’s universities. Funding from CFI provides the world class infrastructure that allows our researchers to collaborate with industry and research partners around the world. Research funding, together with support for graduate students, creates the opportunities and the skill sets that grows the economy and improve Canada’s productivity.
The University of Manitoba is a leader in fostering research partnerships with the private sector. Over the past decade, the university has garnered 8 NSERC Synergy Awards for Innovation recognizing outstanding university-industry collaborations. In accordance with the federal Science & Technology Strategy and the findings of the Jenkins Report, the university encourages further investments in partnership programs, like those administered through the granting councils, which foster research partnerships between small and medium sized business and universities.

The second point I would like to make is that investing in international education is critical for the economic growth of Canada. The University of Manitoba provides post-secondary education to over 3,000 international students from nearly 100 countries. These students bring different perspectives to our campus and contribute to the local economy. To attract the best and the brightest from abroad, a first step is the coordination of marketing and branding of Canada as a destination for international study. The economic impact of such an investment is significant - international students contributed over $8 billion dollars to the economy in 2010. Moreover, international students, upon graduation, form a highly trained pool of potential immigrants and those who return to their home countries, serve as an international network that can be leveraged by business and public sectors.

At the same time, we should enhance opportunities for Canadian students to enrich their education through study abroad programs. These students gain a global perspective and are exposed to different ways of thinking. They develop knowledge of different cultural and business environments and upon their return, increase Canada’s international opportunities.
Finally, we would recommend that the government increase investments in Aboriginal higher education. By 2026, it is estimated that 1.5 million Canadians will be of Aboriginal ancestry. One-third of Aboriginal Canadians have not completed a high school diploma and only 8% of Canada’s Indigenous population has earned a university degree. If the trend continues, many of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples will not have the opportunity to participate fully in the economy of tomorrow.

The University of Manitoba welcomes over 2,000 Indigenous students, totaling over 7% of the student population – among the highest of any Canadian university. Although the majority of these students enter the University of Manitoba through the usual high school channels, the university has established a suite of ACCESS programs which provides support to those who need it.

Reaching students in the K-12 system, well before they enter university, is crucial. The university works with high schools to demonstrate not only the value of post-secondary education, but also its feasibility. We believe that such reach-back mechanisms can transform the post-secondary situation for many Aboriginal Canadians. The federal government needs to support university programs that address the unique needs of Canada’s Indigenous populations, while improving accessibility and quality of education delivered at primary and secondary schools that cater to large Aboriginal populations. Greater federal investment in family, community and financial support for Aboriginal students is of the utmost importance.

By training a highly qualified labour force able to meet the emerging needs of our economy, and through research and innovation, Canada’s universities play an important role in enhancing Canada’s international competitiveness. The University of
Manitoba encourages the government to build on measures outlined in Budget 2012 and elsewhere by:

- investing additional funding in university research through the granting councils and CFI;
- investing in international education, both to attract top talent to Canada and to provide Canadians with opportunities to study abroad; and by,
- making addition investments in programs supporting Aboriginal education.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak before the Committee, I hope that I have been of service.

Good night.