

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Defence Industrial Strategy recognizes role of research universities in a secure Canada

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February 17, 2026 (OTTAWA, ON) – U15 Canada welcomes the clear role for Canada's leading research universities outlined in the newly published Defence Industrial Strategy, including a target to increase defence research by 85% and the creation of a Science and Research Defence Advisory Council.

Research universities are uniquely positioned to drive breakthroughs in dual-use technologies, including many of the sovereign capabilities identified in the strategy. Our universities are home to world-leading expertise, advanced infrastructure and talented students. The new strategy recognizes that by increasing investment in research and aligning it with industrial strategy, university research will strengthen Canada's national security and economic prosperity at this critical moment.

Following the Prime Minister's commitment in June 2025 to meet Canada's NATO spending commitments, U15 Canada has been working closely with partners in defence, industry and the wider research community to bring the existing strength of the research ecosystem to the table. We are pleased to see this engagement formalized with the creation of a new Science and Research Defence Advisory Council.

"As the Prime Minister articulated at Davos, we are in an era of geopolitical risk and technological competition. The new Defence Industrial Strategy makes it clear that leading research universities can help Canada respond by driving innovation and securing sovereign capabilities here in Canada," said Robert Asselin, CEO of U15 Canada.

"As the government moves forward on its ambitious plan to increase funding for defence research by 85% and establish BOREALIS, U15 Canada is ready to work closely through the new advisory council to build on the strengths of our world-class research universities and realize the long-term economic and industrial opportunities this strategy presents for all Canadians," added Asselin.

About U15 Canada

U15 Canada is an association of fifteen leading research universities across Canada. U15 Canada works to optimize research and innovation policies and programs that advance knowledge, develop highly-qualified leaders for all sectors, and mobilize knowledge for the benefit of all Canadians. In this way, U15 Canada seeks to help Canadian universities make a prosperous, sustainable and just future for all.

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