Brain Migration, Knowledge Spillovers and the Ethics of Public-Private Partnerships

A Canadian Workshop in Conjunction with the European Regional Economic Forum 2009

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Westin Hotel
11 Colonel By Drive,
Ottawa, Canada

Organized by:

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OVERVIEW

The migration of highly skilled people – brain-drain and brain-gain – is a well-known phenomenon with serious implications for the rising and falling fortunes of countries facing significant ‘brain migration.’ Stemming the tide of out-migrations as well as the development of programs to attract and retain highly skilled people, has become a concern of governments world-wide. For countries to gain or maintain their competitive edge, innovative activity must be fostered in knowledge-intensive sectors such as biomedicine, information and communication technologies, renewable energy and aerospace.

The challenge government faces is to support innovation by bringing highly skilled people into networks of institutions in which private and public sector actors create, diffuse and use new technologies. Both the private and public sectors have been investing in research and development clusters or knowledge parks to bolster regional innovation systems, or to provide networked centres of excellence to support nation-level innovation. These are coupled with other supports such as education and training, research funding, access to venture capital, banking and taxation systems that support innovation, risk-taking and entrepreneurship.

The ideal situation is one in which the creation of new knowledge is rapid and abundant, accompanied by low barriers to knowledge translation and commercialization resulting in wealth-creating products and services. The risk faced by all countries is that if the opportunities and inducements to foster innovation, risk-taking and entrepreneurship are mis-timed or incomplete, barriers internal to an innovation system will arise. High skills migration may result, and entrepreneurship will occur elsewhere.

This workshop provides an opportunity to consider the causes and effects of ‘brain migration’ in the context of innovation systems where knowledge spillovers resulting in entrepreneurial behavior are sought by public and private sector actors. Recent reports from the Conference Board of Canada, and the anticipated report of the Council of Canadian Academies, identify a need in Canada for policies and programs to stimulate innovation, particularly in the private sector which is known to be risk averse and is often described as failing to reach its potential. Internal barriers that cause this behavior threaten Canadian competitiveness and are implicated in ‘brain migration.’

To focus the discussion on a topic of great significance to Canada, the workshop will concentrate on the impact of policies associated with innovation in the health sector in Canada. The health services for Canadians are the largest cost to the federal government, and extensive investments in biomedical science and technology continue. The workshop will examine the opportunities and barriers to innovation created through private-public partnerships that have become the norm in training, research, technology transfer, and the diffusion and use of products and services in the health sector. Particular attention will be paid to eliciting ethically defensible guidelines for partnerships that succeed in attracting or retaining highly skilled people in institutions and networks that foster entrepreneurial activity.

The workshop will engage approximately 25 stakeholders, including experts from academe, industry, policy makers who are engaged in research, training and programmatic initiatives in brain migration. The results of the workshop, both a summary of the discussion as well as recommendations, will be prepared in advance of the European Regional Economic Forum meeting in Nova Gorica, Slovenia, June 8-9, 2009.
AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions
0900 0915  David Castle, University of Ottawa & Peter Phillips, University of Saskatchewan
0915 0930  Boris Cizelj, European Regional Economic Forum 2009

Why Knowledge Matters: Spillovers and Entrepreneurial Behaviour
0930 0945  MaryAnn Feldman, UNC Chapel Hill
0945 1000  Björn Asheim, Lund University
1000 1030  Discussion

Break 1030 1100

Health Sector R&D in Canada: Activity, Funding, and Future
1100 1115  Jean Marion, Rx&D
1115 1130  Leonardo Piccinetti, Business 4 Europe
1130 1200  Discussion

Lunch 1200 1300

New Brain-Drain?: Economic Downturn and Comparative Advantage through Stimulus
1300 1315  Ivy Bourgeault, University of Ottawa
1315 1330  Mario Cervantes, OECD (invited)
1330 1400  Discussion

Break 1400 1430

Strengthening Canadian Health Sector R&D through Partnerships
1430 1445  Mary Beshai, CIHR Partnerships
1445 1500  Karine Morin, University of Ottawa
1500 1530  Discussion

Round Table Discussion, Summary and Recommendations
1530 1630  Rapporteur – Peter W.B. Phillips, University of Saskatchewan