

Shortening “arm’s length”: From the Canada Council to the SSHRC

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Abstract

The Canada Council was created in 1957, with an endowment of public funds, partial insulation from government interference in its decision-making, and a mandate to encourage the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Calls to sever responsibility for the humanities and social sciences from the Council’s responsibilities were made almost immediately. Representatives from these fields were displeased with the amount of money the Council granted to them relative to the support it provided the arts. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the government sought to enhance the political role played by culture within the nation-state, to develop a national science policy, as well as to rationalize its own spending. The Council came under increasing pressure to take government priorities into consideration. Its “arm’s length” status did not co-exist well with the gov-

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ernment’s policy program, eventually leading to the creation of a new federal agency, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

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In 1957, the Canadian government created the Canada Council, an agency mandated to encourage research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The Council was supplied with an endowment to independently fund its activities, and placed at “arm’s length” from federal direction. The government soon realized that, while placing management of public support for the arts, humanities and social sciences with a body they did not have complete control over protected them from certain risks associated with decisions made by the Council, their inability to direct the use of Council funds also posed some challenges with regard to pursuing a focused program of federal support for particular kinds of scholarship. Between 1957 and 1973, the federal government utilized various tactics to extend influence over the Canada Council. Although these tactics certainly did effect change in the Council’s operations, they did not achieve the degree of influence the government sought. In 1974, the government announced its intention to transfer responsibility for supporting the humanities and social science research to a new granting body, and in 1977, it passed legislation creating the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The new council’s relationship to the government differed substantially from that of the Canada Council, particularly with regard to its requirement to incorporate government priorities into its operational decision-making.

This study offers a brief survey of the Canada Council’s relationship with the federal government from 1957 to 1973, focusing on its re-

sponsibilities for supporting research in the humanities and social sciences. After considering what motivated the government to create the Council, the Council's relationship with two particular agents of the federal government – the Treasury Board and the Department of the Secretary of State – are explored, in order to clarify how the government attempted to influence the activities of the Council between 1957 and 1973. The study also addresses the relationship between the Canada Council and advocacy bodies within the humanities and social sciences sector.

The fields in which the Canada Council worked had the potential to be politically volatile and were important to the pursuit of federal goals. During the 1960s, post-secondary education was a policy area within which jurisdictional challenges were fought between the federal and provincial governments. Even though federal interventions in the Council's operations would compel the agency to consider the priorities of the government more closely, they could not guarantee the complicity of the Council in the pursuit of federal goals. By the early 1970s, the government chose to fundamentally reorganize its provision of support for the humanities and social sciences. Part of the strategy was to create a separate federal body that would be better structured to incorporate federal priorities in providing support for the humanities and social sciences.

While the Canada Council was created to work at "arm's length" from the federal government, the 'length of the arm' was not clearly established in the *Canada Council Act* (Statutes, 1957), and would change over time. The Council's original endowment gave the agency about \$3 million in interest per annum to spend on the arts, humanities and social sciences. A significant 1965 federal grant doubled the Council's budget for that year, and another federal funding decision tripled the budget for 1966. In 1967, the government committed to begin annual grants to the Council. Although possessing formal authority over its own decision-making, the Canada

Council very quickly became dependent on annual votes of federal money, as the amount of its annual expendable funds provided by federal appropriation far exceeded the interest on its endowment.

The annual provision of significant public funds to the Council led some within the government to believe that the Council was subject to the same sort of direct control as many other public agencies. Council representatives clung to the idea of their organization’s independence in the service of the arts, humanities and social sciences, though, even as they willingly re-oriented their operations to fit federal desires. Resolution of these conflicting understandings of who the Canada Council was responsible to – its sectoral clients, or the government of Canada – proved critical to the Council’s future.

Calls to sever responsibility for the humanities and social sciences from the Canada Council were made almost as soon as the Council was created. Representatives from these fields were displeased with the Council’s consideration of their needs, particularly the amount of money it granted to them relative to the support it provided the arts. During the 1960s and early 1970s, as the government sought to enhance the political role played by culture within the nation-state, to develop a national science policy, as well as to rationalize spending, the Council came under increasing pressure. Its “arm’s length” status was did not co-exist well with the government’s policy program.

It is conceivable that part of the rationale for placing the Canada Council at “arm’s length” from the government – deferring accountability away from elected officials – was to distance these officials from the risks associated with creating a national agency mandated to intervene in the arts and education sectors, while nonetheless maintaining the appearance of accountability for decisions made with public funds. If this was the case, however, it is intriguing that for at least thirty years (if not perpetually,

if might be argued), federal government relations with the Council were rife with attempts to increase the government's power over decision-making within the Council (Crean; Granatstein; Klages; Mailhot & Melançon; Milligan; Robertson; Woodcock).

In the case of the Canada Council, handing authority for making decisions regarding how to allocate financial support for the humanities and social sciences created the expectation that the state identified the autonomy of these services as being paramount. At the same time, that the state assigned such a level of importance to being involved with these services that it would be willing to fund them while placing them at "arm's length" from its own power is often overlooked. The tension between these two values defines the existence of the Canada Council, if not all of Canada's granting agencies.

Many have pointed to the creation of the Canada Council as an indicator of the 'enlightened benevolence' of Prime Minister St. Laurent's government (Granatstein; Ostry; Schafer & Fortier; Woodcock). The state's intervention in the arts, humanities, and social sciences was not motivated purely by the government's desire to contribute to the development of innovative cultural and academic research, however. Government support for these sectors was conceived within a logic that actively asked how support for these fields might contribute to the achievement of federal government goals.

Setting aside consideration of government support for the arts provided through the Canada Council, let us consider the Council's responsibilities for the humanities and social sciences, in part because these duties would be removed from the Council two decades after it was created. Fisher, Atkinson-Grosjean, and House have noted that "funding of academic research is the only avenue open to the Federal government for shaping academic activities" (304). With regard to the government's interest in

shaping such activities, they propose it is “historically evident” that “science and technology policy emerges from, and is set firmly within, competing definitions of science, utility, and the ‘public good’” (300). The same grounding within utility and ‘public good’ could be easily argued for the humanities and social sciences as a policy concern. A concern that these authors overlook, however, is the possibility that government activities may also suffer from a form of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault); that they are undertaken to an important degree with the intention of extending the power and influence of that government in comparison to, or in conflict with other governmental forces.

This paper explores the federal government’s attempts to negotiate the results of its own policy decisions with regard to providing support for the humanities and social sciences, and the responses these decisions invited from civil society and government departments and agencies. It argues that the history of federal government intervention in Canada Council – in particular as a means for the government to intervene in humanities and social sciences research within Canada – has been strongly shaped by the federal government’s desire to use spending power as a means to not-so-surreptitiously buttress and extend its practical power, if not legislated jurisdiction.

I. CREATING THE CANADA COUNCIL:

During the 1940s and 1950s, the federal government developed a number of programs for provision of support to the humanities and social sciences. The Canada Council concept was not one the government was particularly enamored with. It would only move to create the Council when the future of post-secondary research in the humanities and social sciences were

threatened, and when the initiative strategically strengthened its position against Quebec's jurisdictional claims.

The federal government's move to support post-secondary research dates to the Second World War. As part of reconstruction efforts, the federal government instituted a grant program of \$150 per capita for discharged Canadian veterans attending university. This program drew to a close in fiscal year 1950-51. In response to lobbying from the universities, the government introduced a new funding scheme in spring 1951. The program consisted of federal grants of \$0.50 per citizen, distributed among the universities of each province in proportion to the number of full-time students enrolled. In 1951-52, universities in all Canadian provinces accepted the funds, but in 1952, Quebec's provincial government instructed institutions within its borders to refuse the grants on the grounds the program transgressed the province's constitutional jurisdiction.

Only two weeks before this program was introduced in the House of Commons, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences submitted its final report to the government. The commissioners' more than 150 recommendations included a scheme for the support of the arts and letters similar to the grant scheme described above, as well as creation of a federal body, the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences (Canada, 1951: 8). Despite having legislation for the first recommendation ready to present to the House, the government made no rush to act on the latter one. It did not see the arts as a particularly urgent concern, and the humanities and social sciences already benefited from the support of major US philanthropies such as those set up by Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford. These foundations, for instance, provided most of the funds for the operations of the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada (SSRCC) and the Humanities Research Council of Canada (HRCC).

As the Royal Commission’s recommendations gave the impression the federal government intended to support the humanities and social sciences in Canada, the US philanthropies prepared to concentrate their efforts elsewhere. In the early 1950s, the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations indicated they would soon draw their support for the Humanities and Social Sciences councils to a close (Canadian Federation for the Humanities, 1950; 1953). At the behest of the SSRCC and HRCC, the Prime Minister established a Cabinet committee to study creation of the ‘Canada Council’. The committee echoed the Royal Commission’s recommendation regarding creation of a Council, advising \$250,000 be set aside for humanities and social science scholarships, while advising spending on the arts could be minimal (Cabinet documents, 1954). Fearing Quebec would claim federal interference in an area of provincial jurisdiction, the government declined to take any definitive action regarding the Council.

The government would be compelled to re-assess its position. In order to maintain Rockefeller Foundation support for the HRCC during the summer of 1955, government representatives had to promise creation of the Council was imminent.¹⁾ Early in 1956, Quebec’s Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems reported, arguing the federal government’s university-funding program transgressed provincial jurisdiction. Beginning in 1952, Quebec’s Premier, Maurice Duplessis had refused to allow his province’s universities to accept these federal funds. As an alternate approach, the Quebec Royal Commission proposed lowering federal taxes levied on the province by the amount of funds due for universities under the federal program (Province of Quebec, 1957: Vol. 2, 211). Faced

1) Rockefeller Foundation inter-office correspondence, Gray to Marshall, 1 Sept. 1955, qtd. in Jeffrey D. Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie, & Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts & Letters in Canada* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 184.

with such a challenge, within six months the federal government decided to create the Canada Council. Instead of funding the agency with annual appropriations from Parliament, the government would use an unanticipated \$100 million it had collected in the form of succession duties (taxes on the estates of deceased individuals) as an endowment. The Council was not an agent of the Crown, but the Prime Minister appointed its members and executive. Perhaps most importantly, the Council was free to spend the interest on its endowment as it pleased (*Statutes, 1957*).

While the succession duties from the estates of two wealthy entrepreneurs facilitated a particular course of action, the government's move to create the Canada Council five years after it was first recommended was most certainly spurred by the tandem threats of the withdrawal of philanthropic funding for the humanities and social sciences and Quebec's assertion that federal funding for universities represented jurisdictional poaching. The government's hope was that no provincial government could legitimately claim the "arm's length" Council constituted federal interference.

II. CHALLENGING THE CANADA COUNCIL'S INDEPENDENCE

The Canada Council was given a significantly different form than federal institutions that had been created during the 1930s to intervene in the cultural sector, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or National Film Board. The Council's unique mandate, structure, and source of income led to confusion and conflict between the Council, the government and sectoral representatives. The Council's allocation of its limited budget led humanities and social sciences clients to claim it was inadequate, or worse, unresponsive to their needs. The government hesitated to act on

criticism of the Council, however, as it had legislatively limited its ability to meddle in the Council’s operations.

Almost from the date of its creation, the Canada Council’s limited budget led to conflict between the agency and some of its clients. From the outset, the Council had enlisted the help of the Humanities Research Council of Canada (HRCC) and the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada (SSRCC) to assess applications for Council grants to recipients in these fields. In December 1958, Canada Council representatives met with advisors from the sector. Many of the advisors were alarmed by the Council Chairman’s proposal that the total amount of the Council’s grants be split between the arts, humanities and social sciences on a 14:5:5 ratio. Most sought a levelling of the proportions between the three categories, if not a weighting that favoured the latter two. The advisors grudgingly consented to a ratio of 10:7:7 for one year only (Canada Council, 1958: 2).

By 1960, demands for grants from the Canada Council had ballooned far beyond its budget. Unable to even come close to addressing the overwhelming number of requests for support, particularly in the provision of scholarships and fellowships in the humanities and social sciences, the Council chose to seek additional funds from the government (Canada Council, 1960). Its request was rebuffed.²⁾ Although unwilling to support the Council, under Prime Minister Diefenbaker the federal government twice increased the amount granted to universities, enlarging the allotment to \$1.50 per capita in 1958, and \$2 per capita in 1962.

In 1962, the Humanities Research Council and the Social Sciences Research Council echoed the Canada Council’s plea, jointly producing a

2) Comments by Claude Bissell in personal letter to Jack Granatstein, 26 March 1984; cited in J. L. Granatstein, “Culture and scholarship: The first ten years of the Canada Council”, *Canada: 1957-1967: the Years of Uncertainty and Innovation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 149.

brief suggesting the Council's ability to provide support for research in their respective fields was not adequate (Ostry, 1962). In a brief submitted to Prime Minister Diefenbaker in January 1963, these organizations asked that Canada Council funds committed to research in their fields be double d.³⁾ Their brief did not address how the government could dictate to the semi-autonomous Canada Council how to portion out its funds. In December 1963, the Canadian Universities Foundation (CUF) – a body created in the early 1950s by the NCCU to administer the program of federal grants – requested the Finance Minister assure the Canada Council “of additional expendable funds amounting to at least \$2 million per annum in order that it may provide sharply increased funds for its programme in the humanities and social sciences” (Canadian Universities Federation, 1963: 7). The CUF did not address how the federal government could direct the activities of the semi-autonomous Council either.

The tone of criticism coming from the humanities and social sciences sector changed substantially in 1963, when the Council decided to take back complete control over assessment of all applications in the humanities and social sciences fields. Immediately, the HRCC and SSRCC began to express deep doubts about the capacity of the Canada Council to wisely manage support for research in their fields. A second report prepared for the councils, left in confidential draft form, observed the humanities and social sciences councils had, since the creation of the Canada Council, operated “within a framework pretty well determined for them by a govern-

3) “Brief to the Prime Minister of Canada from the Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Social Science Research Council of Canada on the subject of encouragement of scholarly and research activities in the humanities and social sciences,” 16 January 1963. LAC, Social Sciences Federation of Canada, Volume 97, Part 2, File, Summary of Survey; ctd. in Donald Fisher, *The Social Sciences in Canada: 50 Years of National Activity by the Social Science Federation of Canada* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1991), 50.

ment-appointed Council whose main interests lay elsewhere in the cultural field.” The report counselled the research bodies should “free themselves of the restrictions imposed upon them.”⁴⁾ (It is noteworthy that the author of this report was Bernard Ostry, who in the late 1960s would join the federal department responsible for liaising between Parliament and the Canada Council.)

Despite humanities and social sciences advocates’ claims that the Canada Council was not capable of adequately addressing the needs of their sector, Council representatives continued to argue that more money was all that was needed. In a 1964 brief to the government, the Council claimed its revenue was “far too slight” to meet new demands for support, let alone to continue to support those organizations and individuals already receiving Council grants (Canada Council, 1964b: 2). Comparing the funds available to the Canada Council for support of the humanities and social sciences (\$1,200,000 in 1962-3) with those available to the National Research Council (\$10,580,000 in 1962-3), the Canada Council asked the government to increase its endowment fund by \$30,000,000 over three years. With this support, the Council estimated its total income would increase from \$3,140,000 in 1964-5 to \$4,940,000 in 1967-8 (Canada Council, 1964b - Annex C: 10).

In 1964, the government transferred responsibility for representing the Canada Council in Parliament from the Prime Minister to the Secretary of State, signifying the beginning of a new relationship between the government and the Council. In late 1964, in response to an Opposition question regarding the fate of the Canada Council’s 1963 request for \$30 million, the

4) Bernard Ostry, “Confidential Draft Research in the Humanities and in the Social Sciences in Canada 1963,” Ottawa, 1963, LAC, Social Sciences Federation of Canada, Volume 97, Part 2, File, Summary of Survey; qtd. in Fisher, *The Social Sciences*..., 50.

Secretary of State declared the government was delaying making any commitment to the Council until it decided whether to divest the Council of its responsibility for supporting research in the humanities and social sciences (*Debates*, 1964: 10081). Dissent in the sector clearly had reached the government.

The Council Director recommended the government leave the organization intact, and instead of dividing it, provide it with greatly increased funding. He suggested the Council had successfully established a “fine public reputation in both English and French Canada.” Continuing in this vein, he added, “the sensitive areas in which it works makes the Council’s acceptance in all provinces without exception particularly significant” (Canada Council, 1964a: 2). Of course, Council representatives realized intervention in culture and post-secondary education was risky for the federal government, particularly to its relationship with Quebec. Almost as an afterthought, it seems, the Council Director speculated the legislative action needed to alter the Council’s mandate, “might stir up a controversy which you may feel should be avoided at this time” (Canada Council, 1964a: 4). The anticipated, but unnamed controversy would undoubtedly involve Quebec’s response to federal interventions.

The reality of the Canadian political situation in 1964 – support for independence growing in Quebec, accompanied by violence, and the need for the minority Liberal federal government to appear sensitive to francophone concerns; the same reality that led the first Pearson government to initiate the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism – meant the political costs of attempting to meddle with a semi-autonomous granting agency active in sectors identified as important to the government’s biculturalism and bilingualism goals was high. The Council Director’s warning was undoubtedly one that resonated with the Secretary of State.

III. INFLUENCING THE CANADA COUNCIL:

Revenue shortfall during the early 1960s was certainly limiting the Canada Council’s ability to give as much support to as many clients as it desired. Its financial situation was about to change, though. Improvement in its spending capacity would come at a price to its operational independence, however.

In early 1965, the Cabinet considered the Canada Council’s request for funds. One of the reasons for the Council’s request, it claimed, was to redress the disparity between the money available for research in the humanities and social sciences (fields the Council was responsible for), and that for research in medicine and the natural sciences (which fell to the Medical Research Council and Natural Research Council, respectively). Between 1960–61 and 1964–65 public funds for the latter two sectors rose 153%, while the Council’s endowment income had remained static (Cabinet documents, 1965a).

Cabinet decided to grant the Canada Council \$10 million for use through fiscal year 1967–68, adding that the government was not committing to “provide annual grants on a continuing basis or otherwise to increase the Council’s annual income after 1967” (Cabinet documents, 1965b: 9–10). Announcing the grant in the House, the Prime Minister clarified the reason for the government’s decision. It was necessary to fund the arts, humanities and social sciences, Pearson offered, to “strengthen the identity and the unity of our country as we approach our Centennial” (*Globe & Mail*: 12). The implication was that once identity and unity were strengthened during the Centennial programs, the reason for providing special funding to the Council would disappear.

In December 1965, the Canada Council returned to ask for assistance from the government. The proposal, as forwarded to Cabinet by Secretary

of State Judy LaMarsh, claimed to be “designed to enable the Canada Council... to meet the most essential demands for increased support on behalf of research in the social sciences and humanities.” Describing the rising demands for research and scholarship funds in these sectors, the Council suggested it would require between \$5.8 and \$6.8 million dollars in fiscal year 1966–1967 (Cabinet documents, 1966a: 2). Interesting to note is that, despite the Council’s identification of the desperate need in the humanities and social sciences fields, it had consistently directed more funding towards the arts every year since its creation than to these other fields (Canada Council Annual Reports, 1957–1966).

An increase in funds for the Council was not only needed to meet the vastly increasing demands in humanities and social science research. The Council also sought to meet its “minimal obligations” to the arts and UNESCO, as well as its administrative budget, all of which would require an additional \$700,000. The increase in funds sought for these responsibilities, including the arts, represented less than ten percent of the amount requested for support of research in the humanities and social sciences.

The Canada Council proposed a novel means to acquire the funds it needed. The Council asked for no new expenditures on the government’s part, but sought permission to expend the remainder of the \$10 million voted the Council by Cabinet in 1965. The Council also attached a condition to their request. The Cabinet’s acceptance of this solution, the Council asserted, “would imply Cabinet’s agreement to consider in a year’s time...a more elaborate submission which would raise the Council’s annual resources... to a level which could then be adjusted annually by an escalation factor” (Cabinet documents, 1966a: 2). Carrying its comparison to the Medical Research Council and National Research Council to the logical conclusion, the Canada Council was suggesting it, too, deserved annual

support from the federal government.

In April 1966, the Cabinet approved the Council’s request to spend the balance of the \$10 million appropriation voted in the previous year, “to provide increased support for research in the social sciences and humanities during 1966/67” (Cabinet documents, 1966b: 3). As for the Council’s condition regarding provision of annual funding, Cabinet reserved judgment. It agreed only to “entertain in due course a submission from the Canada Council respecting its needs for 1967/68 but without commitment as to the extent of the financial provision that might be considered at that time” (Cabinet documents, 1966b: 4). If nothing else, the government bought time to consider its relationship to the Canada Council.

The government knew its legislative power to put conditions on grants to the Council was ambiguous. The immediate need to fund scholarly research, or to ensure the funds would not be spent primarily on the arts, however, called for unusual directorial action.

IV. DIRECTING THE CANADA COUNCIL:

Regardless of the unclear power of the government to direct the Council’s allocation of federal grants, the government’s indication of how it wanted the funds it provided the Council spent was a significant departure from the idea of the Council’s legislated “arm’s length” status. That 1966–67 was the first year the Canada Council granted more funds to the humanities and social sciences than the arts indicates the government’s tactic was successful (Canada Council Annual Report, 1967). From this point on, the government would move to assert stronger, more direct control over Council’s activities.

In August 1966, the Council submitted a request to the Secretary of

State for the initiation of a federal program of annual support. Cabinet had agreed to consider the Canada Council's needs for 1967-68, but had not made any guarantees regarding how it might respond to such a submission" (Cabinet documents, 1966b: 3). The Council's request enumerated its needs for three years: \$16.9 million for 1967-68, \$21.4 million for 1968-69, and \$26 million for 1968-69 (Cabinet documents, 1966c: 4). If the requested amounts were granted, by fiscal year 1968-69 the federal government would be supplying about 90% of the Canada Council's total annual income.

In its request, the Council argued the amount requested for 1967-68 was required to indicate the federal government was making "a clear national commitment" to the social sciences and humanities, "as has already been done for the natural sciences." Approval was also required to ensure the arts continued to develop along the lines established by Centennial spending. The Council's funding programs had genuinely created a flowering in the sectors supported by the Council over the previous decade. A step back from the current level of funding, it suggested, would undo all of this work. Staving off deterioration in the arts, humanities and social sciences would come at a significant cost. According to the Canada Council brief, a 700% expansion of the Council's annual expendable funds within three years was needed (Canada Council, 1966a: 2).

The Canada Council might have been inclined to make a much less ambitious request if it had not already created an expectation of a particular level of support among its clientele. The \$10 million provided to the Council by the government in 1965 would be completely expended by the end of fiscal year 1966-67. Council Director Boucher warned some of his peers that a lack of substantial government support could have detrimental effects on the future of the Canada Council. If the government provided the Council only \$10 million to spend in the upcoming year (which would

still represent a 33% increase over the previous year’s grant), it

would place the Council in the most invidious position of having to backtrack on many of its programs. We would have to erect new restrictions and start a new wave of disaffection from which we would take years to recover.

This could well revive the premature suggestion that the Council be split in two not because it has achieved enough strength, but because it is definitely too weak to meet the minimal objectives of either of its two constituencies.

Resolving the situation to the satisfaction of the Council required careful advocacy.

The negotiations that followed the initial submission of the Canada Council’s request highlight how controversial everyone involved realized the request would be. The Secretary of State did not immediately forward the Council’s request to Cabinet. In a September meeting with Council representatives, she advised a few members of the Council raise the issue of their request with Cabinet ministers they knew well. In a confidential memo to the Canada Council Chair and select members of the Council, Director Jean Boucher noted,

while such an approach would be quite improper if it were undertaken by a department or agency that has full opportunity to argue its requirements with the Treasury Board, the Council is in an essentially different position.

Despite accepting federal funds, Boucher clarified, “the Council is still very much in the position of an independent body asking for a grant, and

free to round up as much ministerial support as it can” (Canada Council, 1966a: 1). From Boucher’s point of view, the Council’s acceptance of the government’s grants in 1965, and the consideration it gave in 1966 to the government’s desires regarding allocation of funds had not affected the Council’s freedom to act in any way.

The argument Boucher advised members of the Council to make to members of the Cabinet followed three critical themes, two of which addressed the situation in the humanities and social sciences. One argument offered the idea that support for the arts would help to reinforce the gains made under federal Centennial-related spending. The second suggested public funding for the Council provided an expedient means to satisfy the politically ‘sticky’ desire of the federal government to involve itself in supporting higher education in Canada. “A policy of increased assistance to research,” the brief stated, “is uniquely suited to the present political situation. It helps universities without opening up the prospect of opting out arrangements or of joint programmes where provinces get all the credit.” The most important argument Boucher offered for a significant increase to Council funding was to point out the vast difference in federal spending on support for medical and scientific research compared to that for the humanities and social sciences (Canada Council, 1966a: 2).

In the Treasury Board’s initial projections for fiscal year 1967–68, the Canada Council was allotted \$10 million (Treasury Board, 1966). When the Canada Council’s application reached Cabinet in November 1966, however, the Council’s lobbying clearly paid rich dividends. Apparently without substantial discussion or dissent, the Cabinet agreed to provide the Canada Council with \$16.9 million for fiscal year 1967–68. It also instructed the Treasury Board to develop a formula for funding the Council that would provide it with “an assurance of government support” in line with the projection of needs presented in the Council’s request (Cabinet resolution,

1966d: 9).

It is important to note that the Cabinet very likely conceived of its new support to the Council as being primarily intended, once again, to support research in the humanities and social sciences, not the arts. The Secretary of State argued to the Treasury Board that researchers’ needs gave merit to the Council’s request, and in announcing the decision to support the Council in the House of Commons, the Minister prioritized the need for increased funds for humanities and social science research programs (*Debates*, 1966: 10642-3).

Recognizing the Council had won a difficult victory based on the Cabinet’s interest in a select area of the Council’s mandate, Boucher suggested to Council members,

if members are asked whether the arts program will share in the increase their answer should be that there will also be a substantial increase in that direction but my advice would be to avoid discussing the proportion that each program will eventually get (Canada Council, 1966b).

That the increase was expected to be ‘substantial’ and not necessarily ‘equal’ suggests research in the humanities and the social sciences was expected to be a priority in disbursement of the funding. This expectation would not only correspond to the statements made by the Minister, but also the preferences voiced by the Cabinet in its decision eight months before.

Despite achieving what the Canada Council Director described as ‘no small victory’ in the fall of 1966, within a year the Council was seeking to renegotiate its deal with the government. In a June 1967 memo to the Treasury Board the Council altered their estimates for 1968-69, projecting

their financial need would now be approximately \$27.9 million; an increase of \$6.9 million over the amount the Cabinet had committed to provide the Council for the year (Cabinet documents, 1967a). The Treasury Board notified the Council it could not provide more than the \$21 million estimated by the Cabinet almost a year earlier. The Board explained the level of funding set by Cabinet had been to rectify a difference in the level of funding between the Canada Council, Medical Research Council, and National Research Council (Treasury Board, 1967: 1). The Board's position was that the significant funds voted the Canada Council in 1965 and 1966 meant the three councils were approaching parity in the base from which their funding was calculated.

On the basis of the Treasury Board's refusal, the Council revised its application. In its second submission of 1968–69 estimates, the Canada Council sought a 33.3% increase in its funds, which it argued was commensurate with the increases being made to the National Research Council and Medical Research Council. The amount requested was lowered to \$24.2 million, down \$3.7 million from the request presented to the Treasury Board (Cabinet documents, 1967a). Despite the Council's resistance to the Treasury Board's suggestions, the Cabinet redirected the request to the Treasury Board for resolution (Cabinet documents, 1967b: 9). In the end, the Council was granted \$20,530,000 for 1968–69. This constituted a 20% increase over the previous year's federal funding for the Council, but a significant shortfall from what the Council had hoped for.

Despite Treasury Board refusal of its estimates for 1968–69, even after reduction, the Canada Council's dreams of growth were not defeated. In late 1967, the Council began the application process for 1969–70 funding with renewed calls for increased resources, asking for \$37.39 million for the upcoming fiscal year. This amount exceeded that promised by the Cabinet in November 1966 by almost \$10.5 million. Although the Treasury

Board suggested the Council seriously consider lowering the amount of its request, the Council’s Chair refused (Canada Council, 1968a: 1).

The Treasury Board was not impressed. If the Canada Council could find no rationale to reduce the amount of its estimated needs for 1969–70, the Board was certainly not afraid to point some out. Considering the amount requested for support of the social sciences and humanities, the Treasury Board noted the Council’s ratio of doctoral fellowships to applicants was arbitrary. Similarly, the Board argued the Council was improperly applying the recommendations regarding spending in the humanities and social sciences made by an inquiry organized by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada to argue for increased federal government support for the arts. The Treasury Board observed this “argument cannot be used with regard to your total program, since it was not concerned with assistance to the arts, an area comprising about one-third of your total program” (Treasury Board, 1968a: 2).

The Department of the Secretary of State immediately flagged the Board’s suggestion. Henry Hindley, Under-Secretary of State, wrote Council Director Jean Boucher late in January 1968 to explain how the Treasury Board’s comments intimated deeper problems in the offing for the Council. He suggested the Council’s acceptance of regular public funding might have confused the Council’s relationship with the government:

We have been worried for some time that the size of the grants now required by the Council, by comparison with its investment income, might lead to a disposition on the part of the Treasury Board to restrict freedom of action for the Council by formally dividing up the grant between the arts on the one hand and the humanities and social sciences on the other. It would be but one step beyond that to insist on further subdivisions, specifying earmarked

amounts for particular purposes. (Dept of the Secretary of State, 1968: 1.)

Why the Treasury Board might seek to control the allocation of funds to these sectors was left unstated, but as the previous year's budget negotiations indicate, the government was clearly intent on prioritizing spending on one area of the Council's mandate.

The Treasury Secretary admitted, "the Council, while largely dependent on annual appropriations and not being a Crown corporation, is not required to submit corporate budgets under the *Financial Administration Act*." Given its use of significant public funds, though, the Treasury Board Secretary advised the Council should provide the Board with a budget, "in order to fulfill the general responsibilities of the Board under the *Financial Administration Act*." The letter explained the budget document would,

distinguish between the requirements of the program of assistance to the arts and those of assistance to the humanities and social sciences, as well as permitting [*sic*] an analysis of the gross program against which the other sources of assistance are applied. (Treasury Board, 1968b: 1.)

The Treasury Board's request indicated a desire to approve the balance of Canada Council funding between the arts, humanities and social sciences. The Treasury Board Secretary explained, "It would be understood that the basic elements of such a budget, once approved, would not be departed from without referral back to the Board for decision" (Treasury Board, 1968b: 2). In other words, the Treasury Board wanted the Canada Council to submit its general budget to them for approval, much as other federal departments and agencies did.

The Council pointed out that its special status as a public agency operating at ‘arm’s length’ from government intervention, and using funds donated to it from outside the government (however slight these might be in actuality, in comparison to its use of public funds), meant the Treasury Board had limited ability to compel the Council to follow government instructions regarding spending priorities. Nonetheless, the Canada Council agreed it would “provide all information that is necessary for proper appraisal by Treasury Board of the financial requirements of the Canada Council for its different programs” (Canada Council, 1968b: 1). If the Treasury Board decided to recommend less than was requested, the Council would “have to readjust its priorities as it sees fit” (Canada Council, 1968b: 1-2). While this might have been intended as a cleverly evasive turn of phrase which could be translated as, “we’ll do what we like with what you give us”, the understanding within the Council was that the Treasury Board’s allotment of funds to the various fields the Council was responsible for would have to be respected (Milligan, 275).

With nary a whimper, the Canada Council surrendered significant control over the allocation of its budget. While it would remain free to decide on the form and priority of particular programs, the Council’s ability to pursue initiatives in any of the sectors it was mandated to service would have to be realized within constraints arrived at in negotiation with the federal government. The length of the arm holding the government from control over the Council had suddenly grown shorter.

V. UNDOING “ARM’S LENGTH”:

The reduction of the Canada Council’s autonomy from government direction during 1967/8, strangely enough, helped establish conditions for

further conflict between the Council and the government. As the national economic situation deteriorated, the government was compelled to more carefully consider how its spending fit with government policy priorities. Unfortunately for the Council, the government was attempting to develop more clearly rationalized and targeted plans for federal involvement in culture and the sciences. These interests of the state would require the kind of decision-making and directorial power over priorities and plans that simply could not be guaranteed when working with an “arm’s length” agency, even under the new agreement the Canada Council and Treasury Board had agreed upon.

In March 1968, the Treasury Board warned Canada Council Director Jean Boucher, “resources likely to be available for the programs of the government will fall far short of the demand” for 1969–70. The Board suggested,

You may wish... to give the most careful consideration to new year priorities and to the possibility of scaling down or elimination of one or more activities so that it will be possible to divert funds to other activities of greater significance in your department’s or the government’s current scale of priorities. (Treasury Board, 1968c.)

The Treasury Board’s comments recognized the priorities of the semi-autonomous Canada Council and the government might not be the same.

The Treasury Board’s advice to ‘scale down’ activities was certainly not reflected in the Canada Council’s application for a 1969–70 appropriation. The Council asked for \$26.1 million, an amount Cabinet had agreed to in late 1966, and served notice it hoped for almost \$39.5 million for 1970–71. After reviewing the Council’s application, the Treasury Board recom-

mended an appropriation of \$23.7 million, \$3.2 million (12%) less than requested. Nonetheless, this amount would constitute a \$3.2 million (12%) increase over the 1968–69 appropriation. The Treasury Board indicated the entirety of the recommended increase should be directed, however, towards supporting the humanities and social sciences (Canada Council, 1968c). Under the agreement reached with the Council earlier in the year, the Treasury Board could dictate such a division of funds within the budget. If the government accepted the Board’s recommendation, there would be no increase in public monies given to the Canada Council for arts funding.

In May 1968, the Treasury Board recommended the government restrict growth in the Council’s budget to ten percent per year between fiscal years 1970–71 through 1973–74 for the humanities, social sciences, and performing arts. No increase was allotted for the remainder of the Council’s Arts programs (Dept. of the Secretary of State, 1969: 1).

The Canada Council, meanwhile, was moving in the very opposite direction to the Treasury Board with regards to assessment of priority areas for spending. Although Council representatives had elected to lower the amount they sought from the federal government in 1970–71 by over \$8 million from their application for the previous year, “*le diminution du montant de notre demande résulte principalement d’une réduction de \$4.6 millions au chapitre des humanités et sciences sociaux et de \$2.5 millions au chapitre des arts, par rapport à nos prévisions de l’an dernier*” (Canada Council, 1969: 2). In this case, the Council’s frugality, while intersecting with the government’s overall stated aims, was clearly not going to reconcile with the Treasury Board’s prioritization of where Council spending should be directed.

In August 1969, Trudeau announced his government intended to hold federal spending for 1970–71 at the 1969–70 level (excepting a number of

priority areas).⁵⁾ At about the same time, the Cabinet decided to alter the Treasury Board's recommendation regarding the Canada Council's 1970–71 appropriation, refusing to grant the ten percent budgetary increase for research in the human sciences and recommending the only growth in the appropriation be \$500,000 for the Council's Arts program (Cabinet documents, 1969: 2; 1970a: 2).

Attempting to appeal to what had seemed to be the government's prime area of interest in Council operations, until recently, Council representatives sought from Cabinet a ten percent (\$1.8 million) increase in support for the humanities and social sciences for 1969–70 (Cabinet documents, 1969: 2). When Cabinet discussed the request in January 1970, the President of the Treasury Board expressed concerns with what he felt were the Canada Council's failings in providing support to the humanities and social sciences, and suggested Cabinet refuse the application but offer, "the possibility of an increased budget if the Council changes its emphasis in the direction of a more mission-oriented approach" (Cabinet documents, 1970a: 2). The Cabinet decided not to grant the Council extra funds, instructing the Secretary of State and President of the Treasury Board to emphasize to the Canada Council, "the importance the government attached to a new approach in the social sciences which could provide answers to important national problems," and urge, "the Canada Council to put forward for government consideration a more co-ordinated and organized program in this field, on the basis of which the Council's budgetary requirements for the fiscal year 1971–72 could be examined" (Cabinet documents, 1970a: 2). In other words, if the Canada Council desired government support, its programs would have to take the form desired by the

5) Trudeau announced his plan in a televised speech to the nation on the evening of August 13, 1969. The text of the speech was reprinted in the *Toronto Star*. 1969. "Inflation makes so many people suffer": Trudeau," 14 August.

government, and adopt the goals valued by them as well.

Peter Dwyer, the Council’s new Director, responded in a rather strange fashion. Dwyer informed Secretary of State Gérard Pelletier the Cabinet’s directive concerned the Council “because it would seem to make a fundamental shift in the Council’s relation to the government” (Canada Council, 1970a: 1). Quickly backpedaling from his intimation of impropriety on the part of the government, Dwyer asserted the Cabinet’s directive was unnecessary because the “established program” the Canada Council was already engaged in was “rational and coherent,” and offered, “important practical and immediate benefits to the general life of the country, and to the special needs of its institutions, both public and private” (Canada Council, 1970a: 2-3). Then, undercutting his assertion, Dwyer suggested the government didn’t need to intervene in the Council’s operations in this case, as the Council had, “for some time, been evolving plans (which it has not yet had an opportunity to put before ministers) which we believe anticipate in a very large measure the desire reflected in the Cabinet decision” (Canada Council, 1970a: 3). In short, whether the Cabinet’s directive was improper or not, and whether the Canada Council was offering the benefits to the country sought by the government already, it was willing to alter its programming decisions to ensure a continued flow of revenue from the federal government.

Regardless of the intentions of the Council’s indication of willingness to comply, it was told in no uncertain terms it was expected to ‘play ball’ with the government. In a discussion with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in February 1970, Dwyer told Trudeau the Cabinet decision “seemed to represent…an erosion of its [the Council’s] autonomy.” For his part, Dwyer reported, the Prime Minister, “could see no reason why the Canada Council should be exempted from the current and general government requirement that expenditures of public funds should be directed to the present needs

of our society” (Canada Council, 1970b: 1). Addressing those needs, he believed, might involve significant alteration of the Canada Council’s values and operations.

In May 1970, the Cabinet approved a comprehensive statement of policy goals for cultural initiatives proposed by the Secretary of State. This initiative indicated culture was a priority item for the government (Cabinet documents, 1970b: 10; 1970c). The prioritization of cultural development by Cabinet, along with the Cabinet’s decision to withhold funds from Council programs addressing the humanities and social sciences gave clear direction to the Treasury Board as to where the government sought to direct its support. In late spring 1970, Treasury Board staff reviewed the Secretary of State’s program forecast for 1971–72 and recommended \$25,450,000 be granted the Canada Council; an increase of \$1,250,000 over 1970–71. The increase was to be directed entirely to the Council’s Arts program, as Cabinet had decided to allocate the increase the previous year.

The Council’s Associate Director for University Affairs, Frank Milligan, informed the Deputy Secretary of the Board that the Council would be responding to what he characterized as the ‘Cabinet’s directive’ regarding provision of a more coordinated and organized program in the humanities and social sciences in the near future. Milligan explained that if no additional funds were provided for this portion of the Council’s mandate, however, the activities that would be proposed in the Council’s response could not be undertaken (Canada Council, 1970d: 1–2).

Less than a week after Milligan wrote his letter, the Council presented the Secretary of State with a Memo to Cabinet proposing a slate of research programs in the humanities and social sciences, along with budget projections to maintain these programs to 1975–76. The Council’s efforts to incorporate the Cabinet’s advice into its request for an appropriation consisted, essentially, of the introduction of multiple-year study grants to

develop areas of existing strength in universities, and support for the popularization of Canadian history. The financing of these programs would require maintenance of the current Council budget devoted to the humanities and social sciences, as well as the addition of between four and five million dollars each year, cumulatively (Cabinet documents, 1970d). The Cabinet endorsed the Council's plan (Cabinet documents, 1970e: 11-12).

The approval of the Secretary of State's cultural policy plan, and the Canada Council's plan for the humanities and social sciences, allowed the Council to pursue funding with a renewed sense of what the government wanted. This confidence was reflected in the Council's interactions with the Treasury Board. Based on the Cabinet's decision, the Treasury Board was compelled to allocate over \$800,000 to the Council for support of humanities and social sciences. In September 1970, the Treasury Board Secretary requested the Council's Director develop a budget identifying areas where spending might be reduced. Dwyer responded by informing the Treasury Board "the appropriation level of \$26,310,000 approved by Cabinet for 1971-72 is the minimum requirement of Council for the new year." Defending this assertion, Dwyer noted the Council's ability to develop the new programs approved by the Cabinet was already limited by the size of the approved appropriation. Any reductions, he asserted, would require the reduction of existing programs, including those identified as important by government Ministers (Canada Council, 1970c: 1). Pelletier expressed a similar sentiment to the Treasury Board President, indicating the allocation of \$26,310,000 to the Canada Council for 1971-72, approved by the Board in August, particularly the Board's allocation of a five percent increase (\$860,000) to the humanities and social sciences, was unlikely to be sufficient (Dept. of the Secretary of State, 1970: 1).

During the course of these debates, the government began to indicate its interest in rationalizing its involvement in scientific inquiry. In 1967, it

created the Senate Special Committee on Science Policy, which released an initial report in 1970. The report offered that Canada suffered from a lack of a coordinated, central federal science policy. The year before, an inquiry by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development had also critiqued Canada's lack of an organized policy program addressing the sciences. (OECD). The same year, a report prepared for the Science Council of Canada and the Canada Council advised responsibility for the humanities and social sciences be removed from the Canada Council (Macdonald). In response to this line of criticism, the government created a new federal department in 1971, the Ministry of State for Science and Technology. In early 1972, the Senate Science inquiry advised responsibility for the humanities and social sciences should be taken away from the Canada Council (Senate, 1970; *Debates*, 1972: 72).

As the government worked to clarify its priorities in the arts, humanities and social sciences, it sent mixed messages to the Canada Council. The Council attempted to judiciously address the needs of its clients by maintaining levels of funding to all the fields it was mandated to support, despite the government's turn to austerity measures. Sectoral representatives from the humanities and social sciences, however, pressed for an opportunity to have a granting council to address their interests alone. Having identified the need for a coordinated, interdepartmental and inter-sectoral science policy, and anticipating the difficulties that might ensue in attempting to organize such a program with the Canada Council, the government chose to conclusively resolve its ongoing clash with the Council. In the February 1974 Throne Speech, the government announced its intention of creating a new granting council for the support of the humanities and social sciences (*Debates*, 1974: 3). While advocacy organizations within the humanities and social sciences sectors responded enthusiastically, they also sought to ensure that the new agency would have

“demonstrable independence from distracting influences” (Social Science Research Council: 2) and would be able to “retain its independence...if social science research of quality is to be ensured” (Social Science Research Council: 5).

At the end of 1976, the federal government announced the creation of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (*Debates*, 1976: 1939). The new Council, popularly known as SSHRC, took away a substantial portion of the Canada Council’s mandated responsibilities. The form given the new body was substantially different from that of the Canada Council. The SSHRC acted as an agent of Her Majesty (which the Canada Council did not), and was funded through annual parliamentary appropriation (while the Canada Council was created to operate using the interest from its endowment). (*Statutes*, 1957; 1976.)

During the House of Commons debates regarding creation of the new Council, Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner enumerated the agency’s mandate. The new council would be expected to:

- i) encourage excellence in research; ii) provide a base of advanced knowledge in universities; iii) assist in the selective concentration of research activities; iv) aim for a regional balance in science capacity; v) maintain a base capacity for research training; vi) encourage curiosity-oriented research; [and] vii) encourage research with a potential contribution to national objectives. (Dept. of the Secretary of State, 1976: 6.)

Several of these items indicate a significant break with the Canada Council model. This Council was required to keep “regional balance” in mind in its decision-making regarding awards. It was also expected to incorporate the government’s priorities in its operations, which Faulkner described as

bringing “the council[‘s] and national objectives into closer harmony” (Dept. of the Secretary of State, 1976: 4).

VI. CONCLUSION:

The government’s 1973 decision to divest the Canada Council of its responsibility to encourage research in the humanities and social sciences was a product of the government’s lack of faith in the Council’s willingness to adopt federal priorities. Tactics employed by the government between 1965 and 1973 purchased a degree of complicity on the part of the Council. They did not, however, ensure the Council’s adoption of the government’s emerging policy priorities regarding a national science program. They also did not satisfy vocal and organized sectoral advocates from the humanities and social sciences. The government’s concern with how to manage the Canada Council eventually compelled creation of a more malleable means for intervening in the humanities and social sciences. While Fisher, Grosjean-Atkinson and House suggest that the SSHRC retained a high degree of autonomy (307), it only did so within a greatly changed operational context; with a significantly different mandate that incorporated concerns that the Canada Council had never been legislatively required to consider in its activities.

The creation of the SSHRC also opened a particularly challenging period for the Canada Council. The same year the SSHRC was created, the Chair of the Canada Council was called before a House of Commons Standing Committee to defend her agency’s provision of funding to separatist Quebec artists. In 1980, the Canada Council would be transferred from the Secretary of State to the responsibilities of a new Minister, the Minister of Communications. Following in the spirit of the creation of the SSHRC,

in 1984, the government initiated its most extreme attempt to reshape the Canada Council’s operations, pursuing legislation to remove the Council’s financial independence.

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