Conference Wrap Up

Jeffrey Crelinsten
Publisher & CEO, RE$EARCH MONEY

&

Ted Hewitt
President, SSHRC

In listing the major insights that he would take away from this year's conference, Crelinsten began with the fundamental observation that research and innovation are distinct from one another. He returned to Jenkins' strong emphasis that support for research and innovation is not an "either/or" option but very much a "both/and" necessity. "They're different, but when you say they're different it doesn't mean one is better than the other," he said. "We'll never survive as a trading nation without both."

Crelinsten also pointed to evidence that government is listening to various perspectives on innovation, with the ultimate aim of establishing a common goal so that the country's diverse efforts do not work at cross-purposes. "It's about firm performance and growth — that's the bottom line," he said. "It's about trade, it's about having companies — big ones, medium ones, small ones — trading and doing well. They're profitable, they have market share, they have customers, and they're successful. The other thing, as an

aspirational goal, is to build anchor firms: big, multinational Canadian companies in different sectors of the economy, so that we're in global value chains. Just as we're happy to have IBM open up an R&D lab or an incubator in Canada, let's try to get Poland and Brazil anxious to get one of our anchor firms to open an R&D lab in their country. It's about plugging into a global innovation network, a global value chain. When we look at our strengths, that cluster initiative, let's think about where the opportunities are to plug into these global networks to sell."

For his part, Hewitt commented on the overwhelming importance of working together, avoiding silos through creating collaborations of all kinds between public, private, and academic partnerships. He also pointed to the fact that Canada's economy is dominated by the service sector, which means that while it is worth supporting innovation in areas of science and technology, it is even more important to support new developments in sales and marketing, design, consumer preferences, or branding. "That's what we refer to as social sciences, and we don't even count it," he said, noting that Statistics Canada is only now beginning to tally up these kinds of R&D undertakings. "If we don't count it then we can't support it, so this is a whole other avenue that we have to explore."

Finally, Hewitt returned to the ongoing need for all of us to take chances. "We need to hear more from failed entrepreneurs," he said. "A lot of folks we bring up to talk to us have worked the system and managed to move through and found ways to grow their companies. I want to hear from people who are somehow unable to do this because I want to know what the blocks were and how we might in fact support them in their efforts."