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Ms. Jessica Balaban
Senior Vice President
Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

**McGill Institute for
the Study of Canada**

**L'Institut d'études
canadiennes de McGill**

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Dear Ms. Balaban,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to write to you in my capacity as Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada to acknowledge the role of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies in supporting the Institute's activities.

Let me begin by noting the most important result of this support. Quite simply, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada would not exist without the generous involvement of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. Their gift of ten million dollars made possible the launch of the Institute in 1994.

In the eighteen years since its launch, the Institute has been led by three distinguished directors. Each of these has worked to strengthen the three pillars of the Institute's activities:

- Public education (through the annual conference and other events);
- Research (by attracting high-level scholars to the Institute as visitors and collaborators);
- Undergraduate education (through the Canadian Studies programs run by the Institute).

Public Education

The Institute holds annual conferences on issues of key concern to Canadians, featuring high level public figures from all walks of life and attracting broad and varied audiences. These conferences have often been broadcast on television and have always received extensive press coverage. They have addressed major questions of public policy in Canada and brought together the key players in these policy areas.



The themes of these conferences have ranged from the timely focus of the first (“A Preview of our Year of Choice”, held just before the second referendum on Québec independence) through the hotly debated question of Crime, Justice and the Law in Canada (the topic of the most recent conference.) In between, the Institute’s conferences have dealt with such issues as health care, Canada’s place in the world, Canadian cities and the U.S.-Canadian relationship.

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies have been the single greatest source of support for these conferences, both through the initial gift which established the Institute and through the subsequent creation of the Bronfman Public Education Fund, which provides financial assistance for conference planning and for the event itself.

The generous support provided by the ACBP has allowed the Institute to offer a rich variety of public events each year in addition to its conferences. These include public discussions on hot-button political issues (for example, the debate on the future of Québec’s Liberal Party, held in the 1997-1998 year), summit events on key Canadian public figures and inspiring lectures by prominent Canadians (for example, the lecture by former Prime Minister Joe Clark on “Why The World Needs More Canada,” in 2008).

As the Institute has grown, it has made ever greater use of new media to publicize its activities and involve members of the public. Our website contains video and audio recordings of key events, and our Twitter feeds and Facebook pages have become key tools for introducing the Institute to a broader public. Without the support of the ACBP, these outreach activities would not be possible.

Research

The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada is known around the world for its capacity to host researchers working on all aspects of Canada, from health care policy through the international success of Québec performers. Some of these researchers join us with support from the Fulbright Foundation or Eakin Fellowships supported by another donor. Nevertheless, the infrastructure which makes these visits possible (and provides visitors with offices, administrative support and a context in which they interact with other scholars) is a direct result of the ACBP’s generous support. Likewise, the lively involvement in the Institute of post-doctoral fellows, graduate students and McGill professors joining us for a research term is only possible because of the resources provided by the Philanthropies.

Undergraduate Program

Like many Canadian universities, McGill had undergraduate programs in Canadian Studies for many years, reaching back long before the launch of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. The creation of the Institute has allowed these programs to grow and thrive to a degree unmatched at other universities. Mr. Bronfman's special interest in undergraduate education – in teaching Canadians and non-Canadians alike about Canada – has been a major inspiration for the ongoing expansion and improvement of these programs. The support offered by the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies has allowed the Institute's Major, Minor and Honours programs in Canadian Studies to remain stable despite fluctuations in the university's fiscal situation which have affected other programs much more severely. From the very beginning, the Institute's teaching programs have drawn on the very best among McGill's full-time faculty, while taking advantage of the availability of leading scholars and teachers from outside the university to teach courses on their areas of expertise.

By joining undergraduate education to the research conducted by visiting scholars and to a wide range of public education activities, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada has been able to offer a unique and superior university experience to students whose interests and backgrounds are wide-ranging.

The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada provides a clear, striking example of the achievements possible when philanthropic support accompanies visionary thinking. The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies' commitment to combining academic excellence with a rich program of public education has guided the Institute since its beginning and been a major reason for its success.

As I noted at the beginning, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada would not exist were it not for the generosity of the ACBP. Their continued interest in our activities and success has continued to energize us and ensure that we strive for the highest levels of achievement.

Yours sincerely,



Will Straw, Ph.D.
Director, McGill Institute for the Study of Canada