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Industry funding of Canadian university research jumped 20 per cent last year, the latest report on the commercialization of scholarly invention says.

Private companies committed \$795 million toward innovative university research, out of a total research budget of \$6.1 billion for the 2010 financial year.

Most of the increases were seen in Montreal, Calgary and Edmonton, says the survey report released this week by the [Association of University Technology Managers](#).

The survey does not collect company names, said Sarah Howe, a report contributor and York University's associate director of intellectual property and research agreements.

Even with increases elsewhere, she added, Ontario accounted for 47 per cent of private industry investment in university research for the year.

"Seeing a 20-per-cent increase is quite positive," said Barbara Eccles, head of the Canadian branch of the U.S.-based association and manager of technology transfer at Lakehead University. "Governments have been asking universities and industries to partner together for some time, and we have been."

Technology transfer professionals help identify commercial potential in the latest research at universities and hospitals.

The favourite Canadian example is Pablum. In 1930 at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, Drs. Alan Brown, Fred Tisdal and Theo Drake invented the first ready-to-use mineral-enriched baby cereal. For years, the hospital received a royalty on every box sold, helping to finance further medical research.

Less glamorously, Siracor came into existence at York University last year to develop the commercialization of biomarkers related to cancer diagnostics, Howe said.

It was one of 50 new companies formed last fiscal year as a result of Canadian university research, a 4-per-cent increase over 2009, the report says.

Startups provide one indicator of future potential revenues for universities. Another is the number of commercial licenses issued — both to startups and existing companies.

Last year, a total of 449 commercial licenses were issued, a 27-per-cent drop from a year earlier, the report says.

But survey numbers provide only a "snapshot" and do not necessarily indicate a trend, Howe and Eccles said in a joint phone interview.

"It's difficult to pinpoint the reasons why certain numbers are up and why certain numbers are down in a particular year," said Howe.

"Research ebbs and flows," she said. "You have to get the funding, you have to do your research, you get your outcomes and even then commercialization can take an even longer time span."

For the first time, the survey included data from the federal government's \$285 million initiative to create [Centres of Excellence for Commercialization and Research](#).

In the last three years, 22 such centres have opened across the country to help accelerate commercialization in four areas: environment; natural resources and energy; health and life sciences; and information and communications technologies.

The latest survey covers technology transfer activity at 40 Canadian universities, three more than participated in 2009.