

News Release:

Research consortium calls for more fuel for the research pipeline

For Immediate Release

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OTTAWA— The Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR) supports the short term spending on colleges and universities in the 2009 federal budget, but is concerned for the long term sustainability of funding for basic research.

In particular, the CCR welcomes the injection of \$2 billion into the infrastructure of post-secondary institutions in Canada. It will address the most urgent maintenance and repair needs and create jobs in local communities. CCR also applauds increased support for the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), the additional \$750 million for the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the scholarships and internships for graduate students.

We are deeply disappointed, however, that the latter two come at the cost of cuts to the funding of the research granting councils. “This funding shores up Canada’s research pipeline, but fails to put any gas into it,” says CCR Chair Jody Ciufu. “Research and discovery are fueled by the basic research grants provided by the granting councils. Stop that flow and you risk a sputtering economic engine.”

In a letter that the CCR released in December, we called on the government to increase funding to Canada’s granting councils. The letter argued that though harsh economic times might suggest a need to restrain funding or to focus investment in traditional projects, it is critical to understand that a reduction to research support – even if only for a few years – comes at a huge future cost to the economy and will cause damage to Canada’s research and innovation capacity that could take years to repair.

In light of these developments, the CCR is worried that we be will unable to retain the world class researchers, Canadian and others, who have been attracted by the robust research environment in recent years at Canadian universities. Because of the economic downturn, universities' undergraduate enrolment increases will require more core funding. Beyond the increase promised in the 2008 budget, this budget provides no new funding for the Canada Social Transfer which provides core support to post-secondary education to the provinces.

We are also concerned about the increasingly narrow focus in most of the recent funding mechanisms for postsecondary education and research. In the context of the recent announcements for research and infrastructure, we expect the entire research community to take a decisive role in determining the implementation of the programs and that decisions will be informed by scientific evidence and input. Our working alongside the federal government will ensure a well-balanced research program in Canada.

The Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR) has consistently advocated three priorities: a dedicated transfer for post-secondary education; increased financial support for the granting councils and related agencies; and re-investing in government science.

The Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR) was established in 1976. It consists of 18 organizations that represent researchers in all disciplines across Canada. While the majority of these researchers are based in universities, the constituent organizations have numerous members in government laboratories and in private sector research centres. With approximately 50,000 researchers and 500,000 students represented in these member groups, the CCR is the largest organization in Canada whose primary concerns are the funding of research in all sectors and support for post-secondary education.

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