

**Pre-Budget Consultation Submission to the House of Commons Standing
Committee on Finance from the Canadian Council of University Biology Chairs
July 17, 2014**

Executive Summary

The Canadian Council of University Biology Chairs suggests that Canadian business competitiveness can be increased now and in the future by improving support for investigator-initiated, non-partnered research, as funded through the research granting councils by their independent peer-review mechanisms. Such research, performed in research-intensive Universities, is vital to the health of the Canadian economy of the future, as well as providing a highly-qualified and well-trained workforce.

Recommendation

On behalf of the Canadian Council of University Biology Chairs, we would like to submit this brief recommendation to the pre-budget consultation of the House Finance Committee.

The CCUBC welcomes the identification of the stated theme of “Increasing the competitiveness of Canadian businesses through research, development, innovation and commercialization. “ We would like to address specifically the first of the goals, research. Research has many meanings and connotations. In the view of the CCUBC, the main contribution of research to this theme is discovery, pre-application research, much of which is done in Universities and other academic institutions. This discovery research is most often carried out by investigator-initiated funding from the federal granting tri-councils, without input or partnership support from industry or other sources. It is often performed by trainees: undergraduates, graduate students or postdoctoral fellows.

Why is it particularly important that the budget recognize research that is not partnered with industry? By its very nature, industry is most interested in short term, risk-averse goals that deliver immediate returns to investors or to the bottom line. They are quick to dismiss research projects, change directions with little notice, or drop partnerships all together. Yet, history has shown that the success of industry is dependent on the next generation of products, resulting from discovery-based, long-term research, much of which is high risk and with unpredictable outcome. It is because of this contradictory position that a healthy industrial economy relies on unencumbered government support of discovery research, to open the doors for tomorrow’s new products and economic sectors.

Furthermore, discovery research supports a direct, immediate economic benefit of its own in terms of employment for trainees and staff. It has been estimated that one dollar spent on discovery research generates a return of many times its value in immediate employment opportunities and highly trained workers for the high-tech economy, to say nothing of future economic opportunities unforeseen by current industry (or academia for that matter). A healthy economy of the future relies on a well-educated work force with proficiency in cutting-edge skills. The best education is provided through experiential opportunities found at research-intensive Universities. Such programs rely on discovery-research funding.

The CCUBC would like to encourage the Finance Committee in its deliberations to give serious attention to unpartnered, undirected, investigator-initiated discovery research funding, administered through the tri-councils by their established systems of peer review, in order to ensure the competitiveness of Canadian businesses and the long term health of the Canadian economy.

We would be happy to participate further in the Committee's activities, either by providing further background or in person.

On behalf of the CCUBC Executive and membership,

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