



# Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences Société Canadienne pour les Biosciences Moléculaires

Montréal, 2.12.2014

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
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## Object: Questions on funding for scientific research and innovation

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

I am writing to you today in the name of the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences (CSMB), a scientific society representing thousands of researchers (graduate students, postdoctoral researchers employees and professors) across Canada. The CSMB recognizes the fact that despite a very challenging budgetary environment the Government of Canada has generally kept funding for scientific research and innovation stable. However, due to the natural expansion of Canada's outstanding research institutions and the increasing targeted funding of applied programs over basic curiosity-driven discovery research the available funding has factually declined, leading to a very fragile situation at many research institutions. **There are actually dozens, if not hundreds of laboratories across the country that have already contracted their activities leading to losses of jobs and of capacity to do research and to innovate.** Considering recent funding trends at government funding agencies, others will have to contract in the very near future and risk being closed down over the next few years.

Despite the currently fragile situation, it is not too late for government to react and to avoid the contraction of research capacity, the loss of past investments and of jobs in research. We are confident that decision makers are sensitive to the challenges faced by the scientific community and that the potential of research for improving the health of Canadians and for the development of our economy are well recognized. **As a consequence, we hope that the improving financial situation of the federal government will enable stable increases of funding for research and innovation in the near future.**

In preparation for the Federal Election in 2015 we would like to inform our members about the positions and plans of the different political parties on funding for scientific research and innovation in order to inform their electoral choices. For this reason the board of the CSMB has formulated the following list of requests and questions.

**1.** The number one priority of researchers is to reverse the gradual decline of funding for basic discovery research. The CSMB proposes **3% annual increases of the budgets of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and of the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)** that should be targeted to the most innovative open operating grant competitions.

**2.** To fill a critical gap for renewal of research instrumentation in laboratories, the **NSERC research tools and equipment (RTI) program and the equivalent funding at CIHR should be restored to previous levels.** Funding for the **Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)** continues to be an excellent investment and should be sustained.

**3.** To enable institutions to more adequately support the mission of researchers, we

propose a **gradual increase of the indirect cost program from the current 20% to reach 40%** in 2017.

The requested increases may sound audacious, but if they were properly phased in from 2015-2017 this would coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of our nation. This investment would very adequately show your vision of Canada's future as a nation of innovators dedicated to the generation of knowledge and of economic prosperity.

4. The board of the CSMB and many of our colleagues are concerned about the perceived preference of government funding agencies for applied research at the cost of basic curiosity-driven discovery research. Whereas funding for applied work is of course important, the increasing emphasis on this aspect will cause damages in the long run since we need sustained basic research-driven innovation to fill the pipeline of applied research. **What is your position on this topic and how will you ensure the right balance between funding for basic and applied research?**

In the name of the board and of all our members, I would very much appreciate your feedback on the above proposals and questions. I am of course available to answer any questions you may have on the CSMB and on funding for research and innovation in general. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine  
President of the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences

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Ted Hsu, Liberal Critic (Science and Technology)  
Dr. Mario Pinto, President of NSERC  
Dr. Alain Beaudet, President of CIHR  
Dr. Gilles Patry, President and CEO of the CFI