



Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences Société Canadienne pour les Biosciences Moléculaires

Montréal, 24.2.2015

The Honourable James Moore
Minister of Industry
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Executive / Exécutif

President / Président
Dr. Christian Baron
Université de Montréal

**Past-President / Président
Précédent**
Dr. Andrew Simmonds
University of Alberta

Vice-President / Vice-Président
Dr. Kristin Baetz
University of Ottawa

Treasurer / Trésorier
Dr. Arthur Hilliker
York University

Secretary / Secrétaire
Dr. Randal Johnston
University of Calgary

Councillors / Conseillers
Dr. Martin Bisailon
Université de Sherbrooke

Dr. John Orłowski
McGill University

Dr. Jan Rainey
Dalhousie University

Dr. Philip Hieter
U of British Columbia

Dr. James Davie
University of Manitoba

Trainee Representatives
Dr. Anastassia Voronova
Hospital for Sick Children

Mr. Mustapha Lhor
Université Laval

**Bulletin Editors / Éditeurs du
Bulletin**
Dr. David Williams
University of Toronto

Dr. Frances Sharom
University of Guelph

Secretariat & CSMB Office:
Mrs. Wafaa H. Antonious
Canadian Society for Molecular
Biosciences
C/O Rofail Conference and
Management Services (RCMS)
17 Dossetter Way
Ottawa, ON K1G 4S3
Canada
Tel.: 613 421 7229
Fax.: 613 421 9811
Email: Contact@CSBMCB.ca

Object: Investments addressing urgent needs for discovery research and innovation.

Dear Minister Moore,

Thank you for your letter of February 2nd 2015 in which you kindly respond to our inquiry about the government's priorities for research funding in Canada. This is greatly appreciated. We have in fact never questioned the government's willingness to sustain investments in scientific research and innovation that have factually attracted many new researchers to Canada. However, we have become victims of our own success and cannot ignore the increasingly difficult situation in many discovery research laboratories across the country. This situation is caused by the increasing numbers of excellent researchers in Canada, by changing priorities of the funding agencies CIHR and NSERC, by the largely stagnant funding for these agencies, and by the in fact mostly targeted nature of the top-ups of Tricouncil spending you mention in your letter.

The overwhelming majority of discovery research laboratories critically depend on the very competitive and most innovative open operating grant competitions. The success rates and funding levels have unfortunately dropped to critical levels in recent years. The success rates in the open competitions at CIHR have dropped from about 25% only a few years ago to 14%, and even the funded grants were all cut by 26.8 %. The success rates for NSERC discovery grant applications are higher, but the average grant for a bioscience laboratory is nowadays around 35,000\$/year, which is grossly insufficient for an internationally competitive research program. We are very concerned that shortchanging discovery research programs will continue to undermine the river of innovation and that important potential for translation benefitting the health of Canadians and economic development will be lost.

The recent episode on the narrowly avoided closure of the Mont Mégantic Observatory is only one example of the changed priorities at NSERC, but the consequences keep increasing, largely due to the increasingly insufficient funding available for the open competitions that fund discovery research at NSERC and at CIHR. **In fact, there are currently dozens, if not hundreds of little Mont Mégantic Observatories across our country, research laboratories that have contracted, closed, or face this danger in the near future, if the prioritization of government funding does not change!** This is not sufficiently known since it is not in the nature of scientists to complain openly, but as representatives of a significant part of the bioscience and biomedical research community we cannot ignore this fact.

We realize that the budgetary environment is challenging, but to address the urgent needs of the scientific community the CSMB has made the following proposal in the context of the 2014 pre-budgetary consultation, and I am sending you the full text enclosed. The CSMB proposes the following:

1. 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 that fund investigator-initiated discovery research.

2. Reinstatement of the NSERC research tools and equipment (RTI) program and the equivalent funding at CIHR and continued support for the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI).

3. Gradual increase of the indirect cost program from the current 20% to reach 40% in 2017.

We have costed our proposals and the required resources would closely match the new funding that was recently announced for the Canada First Research Excellence fund. Whereas the creation of the CFREF is certainly an interesting idea, it constitutes yet another new and targeted program, requiring more administration that will only benefit a limited number of researchers. In contrast, the investments into Tricouncil funding proposed by the CSMB would broadly improve the situation for researchers across the country, and that in a peer-reviewed fashion, strictly based on excellence and high potential for discovery and innovation.

In the name of the board, I would kindly request that you consider our proposals. Those proposals should not be seen as competition to existing or new programs like the CFREF, but as a practical and modest investment that would respond to the most urgent needs of the scientific community and that would have broad impact all across our country. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christian Baron, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair, Université de Montréal
Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine
President of the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences

Université de Montréal
Pavillon Roger-Gaudry
C.P. 6128, Succ. Centre-ville
Montréal, Québec
H3C 3J7

c.c. The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Joe Oliver, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health
The Honourable Ed Holder, Minister of State (Science and Technology)
The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition
Kennedy Stewart, NDP Critic (Science and Technology)
Laurin Liu, NDP Deputy Critic (Science and Technology)
Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
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