



**The Canadian Society of
Biochemistry, Molecular
& Cellular Biology**

**La Société Canadienne de
Biochimie, et de Biologie
Moléculaire & Cellulaire**

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October 21, 2006

Minister Tony Clement
Minister's Office - Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1A 0K9

RE: Funding for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research

Dear Honourable Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Society of Biochemistry, Molecular and Cellular Biology (CSBMCB) to comment on the importance of the current budget deliberations to the health and economic wellbeing of Canadians. In particular, I would like you to consider the importance of funding for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

CSBMCB members include Professors at Canadian Universities, Research Scientists at Hospital Research Institutes and Government labs as well as trainees and technical staff at these institutions. These Canadian biochemists, molecular and cell biologists carry out extraordinary research activities in the health sciences that are funded by the CIHR.

The CIHR-funded research activities of CSBMCB members generate considerable and measurable benefit to Canada's citizens. Indeed, these benefits are manifold with the potential to improve the health care of Canadians and provide value to the economy of Canada. Often, publicly-funded health research accomplishes both of these at the same time. Breakthrough discoveries by Canadian biomedical researchers on new disease genes, diagnostics or therapies with potential in conditions like diabetes, cancer or heart disease are typically accompanied by efforts to commercialize and develop technology that will move from the bench to the bedside.

Canada has an illustrious history of success in ground-breaking discovery research that has real impact on medicine and the economy. That legacy may have begun with the landmark discovery by Banting and Best at the University of Toronto of

insulin in 1921. The isolation of this hormone was a breakthrough in diabetes treatment and became a very lucrative target for biotechnology research and development for years to come. The Vancouver-based company QLT was founded in 1981 on technology out of the University of British Columbia that has proven to be unequalled for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in people over the age of 50. Research efforts at the Lady Davis Institute of the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal led to the discovery in 1992 of the antiviral compound 3TC for the treatment of AIDS and to its development by BioChem Pharma, an enormously successful company that continues under the name Shire Pharmaceuticals. This level of innovation is ongoing today and includes success stories such as Neuromed, a company founded in 1998 on CIHR-funded discoveries in pain research at the University of British Columbia.

Thus Canadian researchers with funding in the areas of biochemistry, molecular and cell biology have a well-known history of innovation and impact on medical research in Canada and the world. Today, there are extraordinary advances being made by Canadian researchers that will improve the health of Canadians, make our health care system stronger and more efficient and will help us to compete in the global economy. To continue these efforts our constituents will need vision and support from the federal government. We at the Canadian Society of Biochemistry, Molecular and Cellular Biology urge you to do all that you can to ensure that Canada remains a leader in research and innovation as it relates to human health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric Brown, Ph.D.
President of the CSBMCB

CC. Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Member of Parliament David Sweet