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

## CSMB responds to the 2014 proposed federal budget

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### Economic Action Plan 2014 – continued support for research.

The Government's [2014 Federal Budget](#) has once again emphasized that science, technology and innovation are key to Canada's prosperity. As with the previous 2013 budget, while other sectors were impacted by budget cuts in order to meet the Government's commitment to return to a balanced budget by 2015, overall federal support for research and development was increased. The Canadian Society of Molecular Biosciences (CSMB) applauds the government's continued commitment to build a world-class research and innovation culture that is essential for Canada's long-term prosperity. However, the CSMB is concerned that the realignment of federal support for research with business needs may erode Canada's capacity for discovery-based research that is the long-term foundation of true innovation.

Importantly, there was an announced increase to Tri-council funding of \$46 million per year starting in 2014-15: \$15 million to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), \$15 million to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and \$7 million to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) along with \$9 million for the Indirect Cost Program. This represents roughly a 1.7% increase in the combined \$2.7 billion per year base budget of the granting councils. While funding to both NSERC and SSHRC were not earmarked, the funds allocated to CIHR appear targeted for the Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research and the creation of the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging. Whereas we applaud this investment, we can not hide our disappointment that there was no allocation for the open grant competitions in which new funding is desperately needed. In the last competition the funding rate was below 16%, even the funded grants were cut by 26.8% and the success rate is predicted to drop significantly in the spring 2014 competition. The CSMB is concerned that CIHR operating grant success rates will continue to decrease leading to loss of research capacity and research jobs across the country.

In addition to continued support of the Tri-councils, the government announced a plan to create the Canada First Research Fund to aid Canada's post-secondary institutes to build on their research strengths to become global leaders. Though details of this initiative will not be released until later this year, the Economic Action Plan 2014 proposes to fund this endeavour into a \$200 million annual by 2018-2019.

The budget also proposed to provide 8 million over two years to Mitacs to expand the Elevate program, which provides postdoctoral fellows with training in industry. No new funding was provided for academic graduate students or postdoctoral fellows.

The CSMB is pleased to see that Research and Innovation are a priority of the government even in a austere budget environment, however we are concerned that the growing emphasis of federal investments on business-related Research and Development (R&D) with the goal of creating economic benefits and high-quality jobs is occurring at the expense of the most innovative basic discovery research. “Blue-sky” research and training have a tremendous value as such in a knowledge-based society like ours, even though it may not appear to have immediate commercialization possibilities. In addition, basic discovery research has proven to provide the foundation for entire industries and to be the basis of novel therapeutics and neglecting it is therefore a questionable long-term strategy. Finally, it is important to point out that the majority of NSERC and CIHR operating funds pay the salaries of research staff and of trainees, meaning that it creates and secures many jobs in addition to having a high potential for innovation. Sufficient and stable funding of unfettered discovery research is therefore essential for Canada to maintain a healthy research enterprise, as well as sustain its longer-term competitiveness and future prosperity, and also to train the next generation of innovators.

The CSMB is committed to continue advocating for increased funding for discovery based research for Canadian researchers through both our own initiatives and our continued involvement with Research Canada (<http://www.rc-rc.ca/en>).

**What you can do?** CSMB members are encouraged to write to the Prime Minister (<http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/contact.asp?pageId=30&featureId=10>), their Member of Parliament and/or Cabinet Ministers (<http://www.parl.gc.ca/SenatorsMembers.aspx?Language=E> ) to thank them for their support of the research enterprise in Canada with a short personal success story (discovery, invention, start-up company, successful trainee, etc.) showing the benefits of the continued investment in discovery research.