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**FINANCE**

**Budget 2009**

**Question by:**

**The Honourable Claudette Tardif**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2009**

## THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

### FINANCE

#### BUDGET 2009

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. This Conservative government continues its disdain for science. Researchers and research projects are being undermined through underfunding. Funding to the three national research councils has been slashed in this budget.

South of the border, President Obama is providing \$25 billion for basic research in his stimulus package, whereas this government offers no funds for basic science in its stimulus package. Will this government commit the necessary funds to support our researchers and Canadian universities?

• (1440)

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)):** As usual, the honourable senator bases her questions on articles that appear in newspapers when particular groups, for whatever reason, come forward with their view of what the government is doing.

**Senator Mercer:** Facts, facts!

**Senator LeBreton:** Senator Mercer wants facts, so I will take the time to give honourable senators some facts.

**Senator Stratton:** You walked into that one!

**Senator LeBreton:** Our government is committed to supporting science and innovation as part of our economic action plan, which, as you know, is the name of our Budget 2009. We will make over \$5 billion in strategic new investment in research and innovation. That investment includes Canada Foundation for Innovation, \$750 million; Institute for Quantum Computing, \$50 million; Industrial Research Assistance Program, \$200 million over two years; Canada Graduate Scholarships Program, \$87.5 million over three years; industrial research and development internships, \$3.5 million over two years; and the Canadian Space Agency, \$110 million.

For those wondering about the stimulus, Budget 2009 also contains a \$2 billion knowledge infrastructure fund for the renewal of college infrastructure. To ensure that funding flows quickly, we ask that priority projects be submitted by the end of March so that projects can be announced as early as next month.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada said it is “very pleased” with this funding.

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, my information is not taken from newspapers, but from an open letter written by the Canadian Association of University Teachers. The letter is to the Prime Minister, written on February 12, 2009. It represents more than 65,000 academics and general staff in 121 universities and colleges across Canada.

In the letter, they say that not only were granting councils denied more funding, they were told that their budgets will also be cut by \$147.9 million over the next three years through streamlining operations and aligning programs with government priorities.

Will the funding be restored to the national research councils?

**Senator LeBreton:** The honourable senator started asking me about the teachers, and then she talked about the National Research Council. I will talk about the teachers first.

Our government has increased funding for scholarships with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by 50 per cent, to \$75.2 million. More scholarships are available to more graduate students — I actually thought that teachers taught students, Senator Tardif.

Stakeholders asked us to make more scholarships available to business students; we have done that as well. The Canada Graduate Scholarships Program will continue to fund social sciences and humanities studies and also to support business and finance research.

In the past three budgets, we have increased annual funding for three granting councils by a total of \$205 million per year, providing more opportunities for scientists and researchers across the country to conduct more research.

In Budget 2009, better known as *Canada's Economic Action Plan*, the government is also investing \$87.5 million in the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program to develop, attract and retain the world's best Canadian and international researchers.

With regard to the National Research Council, I am informed that 287 more people are working at the National Research Council this year than last. We are talking about fewer than 25 positions affected by these changes, and the National Research Council is looking at ways that a few of its services can be delivered by working with the private sector.

The Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information is and will remain a key part of the National Research Council.

**Senator Tardif:** I have a supplementary question.

**Senator Comeau:** Good news hurts.

**Senator Tardif:** The core of my question was regarding research. The National Research Council of Canada has been told that it must find savings of \$27.6 million over three years, funds it has been directed to give to small- and medium-sized businesses to innovate. That will affect not only the three national research councils but the National Research Council of Canada as well. We are talking about research.

• (1445)

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, the National Research Council, like all agencies of government, made recommendations to the government as to where efficiencies could be found.

Specifically with regard to the National Research Council, our government in Budget 2009, better known as *Canada's Economic Action Plan*, announced \$5.1 billion in new investment for science and technology, including \$200 million for the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program to help small-

and medium-sized business innovations. The National Research Council and other organizations, as I mentioned previously regarding the strategic review, identified areas within their own jurisdictions where funding could be used more efficiently, and we are reinvesting that money into science and technology programs.

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