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## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Research and Development

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

## THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. As far as research and development are concerned, last week's budget focuses on applied and commercial research. This is a disturbing trend. Everyone agrees that it is essential that we invest in research and science, but applied research must not overshadow basic research. Without basic research, there would be no applied research that is driven by commercial needs and interests. Basic research is the first step in building commercial products. There are countless examples. The government has a responsibility to strike a balance and invest in all levels of the innovation cycle. Why is the government abandoning basic research?

[*English*]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** We are doing no such thing, honourable senators. I actually wonder whether all senators on the other side read the budget.

Our government is strongly committed to supporting science, technology and innovation in Canada. Since 2006, we have provided billions in new funding for initiatives to support science, technology and the growth of innovative firms.

New measures in Economic Action Plan 2013, the budget of last Thursday, build on this strong foundation. It will help create jobs, building on the new approach to promoting business innovation launched in last year's budget. Budget 2013 also proposes measures to strengthen Canada's advanced research capacity, including \$37 million annually to support research partnerships with industry through the federal research granting councils; \$225 million to the Canada Foundation for Innovation for advanced research infrastructure; and \$13 million for the Mitacs Globalink program to attract top students to Canada. Obviously, by the third-party endorsements from many in the scientific community, these measures have been very well received.

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, the Canadian Association of University Teachers has charted the flow of federal research dollars through the granting councils. It finds that after factoring for inflation, base-level funding for research has actually decreased by 7.5 per cent since 2007. While the funding pool is diminished, a larger share of it is targeted funding that may be linked to a particular commercial sector or political goal. This worrisome trend is weakening the country's scientific capability in the long term. For all the emphasis put on skills and training, the government seems to have forgotten that basic research is the training ground for a scientifically skilled workforce.

Will the government commit to provide adequate support for basic scientific research?

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, I just read into the record the significant amount of money that the government has committed to, so it is actually not true that the government does not fully support research in science and technology.