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## CFBS Comments on the 2008 Federal Budget

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*For the scientific and academic communities, the highlight of the Budget is its support to higher education.* The biggest boost is the introduction of the **Vanier Scholarships for doctoral students** within the Canadian Graduate Scholarship program. The Government will initially provide **\$25 million** over two years beginning in **2008-09** but the intention is to ramp up to \$100 million over five years. The program will give 500 PhD students from Canada and abroad \$50,000 annually for up to three years and is aimed at attracting the best young students to Canadian universities.

The Government will also provide **\$3 million** over two years for **Canada Graduate Scholarship** recipients (\$6,000/year to 250 students) to help Canadian students study abroad for one semester. Both of the above programs will be administered by the three granting councils.

The Millennium Scholarship Foundation will be wound down, but will be replaced by a **\$350 million** per year **Canada Student Grant Program** that will give monthly payments to students from low and middle income families. This program will not take effect until 2009. The money will increase to \$430 million by 2012-13. The Government will also streamline and modernize the **Student Loans Program** with **\$123 million over four years starting in 2009-10**. However, the interest rate for these loans will not be changed.

To build upon the success of the Canada Research Chairs program, **20 new Canada Global Excellence Research Chairs** will be established with an **initial \$21 million** investment. Each Chair will receive \$10 million over seven years. The Research Chairs will be targeted to the four priority areas identified in the Government's S&T Strategy: environment, natural resources and energy, health and information and communications technologies.

*The Budget is light in terms of new funding for research and development. The funding that is being provided is appreciated in view of the Government's prudence in light of the expected slower economic environment.* **Genome Canada** is getting a one-time **\$140 million** this year to launch a new competition in genetic research, support six regional genome centres and help Canadian scientists participate in an international genomics project. An additional **\$10 million over two years** will be provided to the **Canadian Light Source Research Synchrotron in Saskatoon**. An additional **\$15 million per year** will be added to support the **indirect cost of research at universities**. A **\$20 million endowment** will be given to the **Gairdner International Awards** to mark its 50th anniversary in 2008. The **three granting councils** will receive an **additional \$80 million per year**, but this will be targeted to research in support of industrial innovation (automotive, manufacturing, forestry and fishing industries), health priorities, and social and economic development in the North. *Although these priorities are important, the additional money will not alleviate the low funding levels at Canada's granting councils for highly rated grant applications for fundamental research at our universities. We must continue to stress the importance of basic research as a foundation for applied research and technology to enhance Canada's competitive edge.* The Budget did not address the need to reinvest in the Government's own research infrastructure, although the savings from the renewal initiative were mentioned as a means to redirect funds to new initiatives within government departments as well as to other priorities.