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## RESPONSE TO THE 2006 FEDERAL BUDGET

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The Canadian Federation of Biological Societies (CFBS) notes that the focus of the 2006 budget is on responding to the Federal Government's election platform. CFBS, at the same time, welcomes the comment by the Harper Government that it recognizes the value of investing in postsecondary education and research for the social and economic well-being of Canadians.

### **POST SECONDARY EDUCATION**

An examination of the new federal budget reveals some initial steps that speak to the needs of students. This takes the form of:

1. Eliminating income tax on scholarships and bursaries.
2. Providing a \$ 500 tax credit for the purchase of textbooks.
3. Making it easier for students to obtain financial assistance by increasing the level of family income that will allow access to student loans.

***These are positive steps but the concern remains that many students will graduate with high debt loads that compromise their ability to proceed to graduate programs.***

CFBS was pleased to note the retention of the post secondary education infrastructure trust. This program is a one-time payment of one billion dollars. This compares to the needs raised by the provincial premiers of \$ 4.9 billion. The Trust is designed to promote innovation and accessibility. The allocation of one billion dollars is contingent on sufficient funds existing from the 2005-06 surplus, in excess of 2 billion dollars. We hope that the government will consider this allocation as an initial contribution to sustain and improve the quality of PSE in Canada. We appreciate that this a good start and trust that the Federal Government will follow through with the provinces in the rebuilding of Canadian universities to the level that is required to compete internationally.

## RESEARCH AND GRANTING COUNCILS

CFBS is extremely disappointed about the allocations to the granting agencies. The increases of \$ 17 million to each of **CIHR** and **NSERC** will compromise their ability to deliver on their programs. At a time when a significant number of new and energetic investigators are entering the system, because of retirements, it is important that an environment of innovation be sustained. Creative individuals tend to be a mobile resource and their loss will reduce Canada's opportunities for increased productivity. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation (**CFI**) will receive \$ 20 million/yr for its Leaders' Opportunity Program. Without further investments in CFI this agency will complete its mission by 2010. CFI continues to play an important role in providing research infrastructure support and has been responsible for many outstanding researchers returning to Canada.

CFBS was pleased to note the \$ 40 million increase to the Indirect Costs Program. This budget item has increased from \$ 260 million to \$ 300 million and now represents ~28% of the direct costs.

### **CFBS continues to express its concern over:**

1. Lack of support for scientists in government laboratories. At a time when in-house expertise is needed in areas of environment and health more attention is needed to ensure that Canada is well served in these areas.
2. Lack of specifics on environmental issues that affect the health and well-being of all Canadians.

At this point when other nations are developing innovation strategies it is unclear, however, what the forward looking vision for innovation in Canada will be. The government indicates that the Ministries of Industry and Finance will develop a science and technology strategy over the next year. **CFBS encourages the Government to involve the Office of the Science Advisor and the Canadian Academies of Sciences in this re-evaluation process.**