



CCUBC and CSZ Advocacy Visits
November 4 and 5, 2008

Prepared by:

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Background

The Canadian Federation of Biological Societies represents a number of Canadian life sciences societies in their efforts to promote the development of science and technology policies that will enable Canada to be competitive and meet the challenges of the 21st century. In that capacity, the CFBS has arranged visits on a yearly basis for representatives of societies to have discussions with members of parliament, senior civil servants and senior officials of granting agencies and other organizations.

In 2008, the Canadian Council of University Biology Chairs (CCUBC) and the Canadian Society of Zoologists (CSZ) asked to meet with senior officials in the following departments and agencies: Agriculture and Agrifood Canada (AAFC), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Environment Canada (EC), Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC). The dates selected for the visits were November 4 and 5, 2008. Unfortunately, none of the appropriate officials from AAFC or EC were available for meetings in the selected timeframe. Moreover, because of the recent federal elections (October 14, 2008), visits could not be arranged with Ministers or MP's.

Society Representatives and Agencies Visited

CCUBC: Louise Nelson, President, (DFO, CFI, NSERC, CCAC); James Cheetham, Past President, (DFO, CFI).

CSZ: Patrice Couture, President, (DFO, CFI, NSERC, CCAC); Thomas Moon (DFO, CFI, NSERC, CCAC); Charles Darveau (CFI).

CFBS: Gabrielle Adams, Executive Director, (DFO, CFI, NSERC, CCAC).

*CFBS the Voice for Life Sciences in Canada ** FCSB la voix des sciences de la vie au Canada*

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Schedule of Visits

I Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)

Patrice Simon, Director, Environment and Biodiversity Science

Issues to be addressed: Current research priorities in DFO and whether there are funds to support partnerships and research outside of the Department. Policies with respect to access for university scientists to research facilities onboard DFO ships and research stations and to DFO experts.

- Dr. Simon indicated that research funding at DFO had increased over the last 6 years. While previously funding was focused on stock assessment, it is now moving to ecosystem science rather than focusing on single species. Researchers are looking at the impacts of fishing on ecosystems with the goal of encouraging sustainable fishing practices. Consumers are demanding “ecocertification” which would indicate that products were obtained without harm to the ecosystem. The industry is buying into this concept. The DFO priorities are ecosystem science and rejuvenation of the science capacity.
- DFO has partnerships with the industry to collect data for the Department. Partnerships with universities are through NSERC networks, such as Ocean Health (Memorial University), Aquatic Invasive Species (University of Windsor) and the CHONE network. DFO wishes to increase partnerships.
- With respect to sharing of facilities, the problem is security. This is especially the case for vessels, but is also true for laboratories. Canadian scientists generally do not have a problem with security clearance, but it may be a problem for foreign students.
- DFO is experiencing a shortage of personnel. There are opportunities for graduates at various levels but students are not aware of these. The Department does hire many students, both summer and co-op, as a way to attract more permanent employees. There is a need for more modeling, assessment and risk analysis expertise but universities are not providing training in these areas.

Conclusion: Universities do not know DFO well. There would be great benefit in having speakers from the Department at society meetings and at universities. The CSZ meeting in May 2009 in Toronto might be a good venue to increase communication between DFO and the university community.

II Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)

Eliot Phillipson, President and CEO

Jac van Beek, Vice-President, Programs and Planning

Issues to be addressed: The future of CFI funding. Number of applications and money actually available in the current competition. Availability of matching funds.

- Dr. Phillipson addresses the issue of continuity of funding for CFI. The current economic downturn will be a negative. However, the current Government is committed to the S&T Strategy and Finance Minister Flaherty has made positive statements to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) regarding the need for increased S&T especially in the current

climate. The Prime Minister has recreated the Ministry of State for Science and Technology, which is a positive sign. With the announcement of the results of the current competition in June, CFI will deliver the message to the Government that institutions will need to know the future of CFI funding so that they can plan accordingly. In response to the question as to what universities and the scientific community can do to help deliver the message regarding the importance of continued CFI funding, Dr. Phillipson made it clear that the community had to speak up and deliver a high-level message to Government that S&T is not a one-time enterprise. They have to highlight the fact that if the infrastructure was not there, top-level scientists would not be attracted to do research in Canada. It is important to point out the great opportunities for Canada through investment in up-to-date infrastructure, especially as related to future economic benefits.

- CFI received over 400 applications in the current competition. There is budget of \$520M for this round. The Research Hospital Fund results have been announced. The Leaders Opportunity Fund is currently being reexamined.
- With respect to the matching funds issue, Dr. Phillipson recognized that the provinces may have difficulty coming up with the required matching dollars due to the economic downturn. However, there is no rule that the matching funds have to come from the provinces. CFI provides 40% of the funding and the applicant institution has to come up with 60%. This money can be obtained from any available sources.
- CFI does not have the answer for dealing with the issue of funds for the longer-term maintenance and operating costs for equipment. It is a bigger problem for younger, smaller institutions. Some institutions are looking at user fees to deal with this issue. CFI is looking into developing an approach to governance of large facilities and is consulting with institutions.

Conclusion: The scientific community has to make it clear to Government that the funding for scientific infrastructure is vitally important for the success of S&T in Canada and must continue at adequate levels to maintain our world position in innovation.

III Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)

Isabelle Blain, Vice President, Research Grants and Scholarships

Janet Walden, Vice President, Research Partnerships Program

Issues to be addressed: The level of targeted versus basic research funding and how groups like the CSZ and CCUBC could assist NSERC to get more money into the Discovery Grants program. New programs, e.g. CREATE. The report of the international review panel and the new Grant Selection Committee structure.

- Janet Walden stated that the balance of funding at NSERC has not changed. New programs have been launched to address priorities in the Governments S&T Strategy. The pressure on basic research funding reflects the growth of the research community. It is also due to the fact that the success rate at CIHR is very low and many applicants, who previously might have applied to CIHR, are now turning to NSERC for funding. There were 700 first time applications in the current competition. There have been inadequate increases in funding to meet the demand. The Tri-council is working at coordinating mandates and cross-linking better to solve some of the problems. In response to the question as to how the societies and

the scientific community could help in convincing the Government of the need for more money for the Discovery Grants program, Janet Walden suggested that the community had to agree on its priorities and articulate them effectively to Government. University's Presidents and the AUCC have been stressing primarily the need for more money for the indirect costs of research. The university community needs to have a united voice regarding the importance of increases to the Discovery Grants program.

- The new Collaborative Research and Training Experience (CREATE) program was discussed. One of the CSZ representatives felt that the program had been introduced without much prior consultation with the universities. The applications are extremely long and require too much time of reviewers. Isabelle Blain explained that this was the first year of what will be an annual competition. In the future there will be a call for letters of intent first to triage applications. The program will be refined. It needs to focus more on providing opportunities for graduates to acquire management skills.
- Isabelle Blain explained the new Grant Selection Committee structure. The new system is meant to deal more effectively with the multidisciplinary nature of many applications. However, it is complex and there is concern in the scientific community as to how well it will work when it is implemented in the next round of competitions.

Conclusion: The visit provided the opportunity for a very useful exchange of information and discussion of concerns between senior NSERC officials and the representatives of CCUBC and CSZ. It also highlighted the importance of the effective communication to Government of the priorities of the research community.

IV Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC)

Clement Gauthier, Executive Director

Michael Baar, Assessment Director and Assessment Program Coordinator

Gilly Griffin, Guidelines and Three R's Programs Director

Julie Dale, Director, Guidelines Development

Pascale Belleau, Education and Communications Coordinator

Issues to be addressed: How the three R's will affect the work of biological Scientists and how the CCAC might get the message out more effectively to researchers in universities.

- Dr. Gauthier gave a background of the composition of the CCAC Council. The CCAC celebrated its 40th anniversary in October and work on its next 5-year plan is in progress. He expressed the view that there is a strong need for an advocacy group for life sciences, not only for funding but also for regulatory issues.
- Dr. Griffin gave a brief overview of the new 3R's (replacement, reduction, refinement) Program. The CCAC has a microsite on its website to familiarize researchers and the public with the intent of this program and with alternatives for implementation of the 3R's. The site needs to be brought to the attention of researchers.
- Dr. Baar indicated that there are now 200 institutions being assessed by CCAC assessment panels. The CCAC has prepared a new Policy for Senior Administrators. The document has

been sent to institutions for discussion. The CCAC is also involved in the continuing education of veterinarians at institutions.

- In response to a question regarding the availability of standard operating procedures and best practices for local Animal Care Committees, Dr. Griffin indicated that such information could be put on a microsite on the CCAC website. Dr. Baar said that the onus is often on the researcher to educate the local ACC members regarding species and procedures.
- Pascale Belleau presented information on training modules developed by the CCAC. New modules are being developed on migratory birds, farm animals and fish. Once developed, training modules are posted on the CCAC website. There is a 5-year cycle for renewal of modules.
- With respect to getting the message on animal care out to researchers in universities, Dr. Griffin indicated that she holds update sessions at various scientific meetings. The CCAC will also be holding webinars to disseminate information. Every May 2-day workshops are held in Ottawa for members of local Animal Care Committees.

Conclusion: The meeting with senior CCAC staff was very informative. The CCAC is very prepared to work with the research community and to provide guidance and help. Dr. Gauthier promised to provide a summary of the discussion at the meeting.