

Questions for the Major Political Parties from the Canadian Consortium for Research

The Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR) is the largest organization in Canada whose primary concerns are the funding of research in all sectors and support for post-secondary education. Established in 1976, CCR consists of 18 organizations that represent 50,000 researchers and 400,000 students in all disciplines across Canada. These researchers are based in universities, government laboratories, and the private sector.

Research in the natural, health and social sciences, and in humanities and engineering, is critically important to the achievement of a country's economic, social and health-care goals, and to the education of the next generation of highly qualified professionals. Initiatives and decisions in this area by Canada's next government will therefore have a major impact upon the future well-being and prosperity of all Canadians for many years to come. We therefore seek answers to the following questions from Canada's major parties.

Question 1

Context: The federal granting councils - NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR - are the prime source of ongoing research support for most university-based researchers. Over the years, university research has provided the foundation on which a large portion of our current economy and our standard of living is based. The importance of applied research is self-evident, but international studies also suggest strongly that a nation's basic research is crucial to its strategic position in the world economy and that no nation can free-ride on the world scientific system.

International reviews find the granting councils' programs to be effective and well administered, yet their budgets still fall far short of those needed to take advantage of the full research potential of Canada's academic research community.

- ***If your party forms the next government, what is your strategy for ensuring that the federal granting councils are funded to the extent that Canada's full university-based research potential, both applied and basic, can be met?***

Question 2

Context: The Government of Canada is currently supporting various national scientific facilities, which have significant economic and scientific impact on Canadians and which greatly contribute to Canada's prestige in international science. Yet, at the present time, the Government appears to have no overall policy for the long-term funding, maintenance, and decommissioning of these facilities, or the establishment of new ones.

- ***If your party forms the next government, what sort of national policy will be put in place for the establishment, long term funding, and management of large-scale scientific facilities?***

Question 3

Context: The Science and Technology Strategy released in 2007 is the primary policy document driving federal spending on issues relating to science and technology research in Canada. The humanities and social sciences are largely absent from the document; yet, the strategy itself could not exist without the underpinning of various human science disciplines. Indeed, as society becomes more multifaceted and more sophisticated, it will require multidisciplinary communities of scholars to advance knowledge and to solve the complex problems shared around the globe.

- ***If your party forms the next government, will you commit to formulating funding policies for post-secondary research that encompasses the broad spectrum of science, including the humanities and social sciences?***

Question 4

Context: A significant amount of Canada's scientific research effort is currently based at federally-funded laboratories. The Government of Canada's 2007 Science and Technology Strategy initiated a process of developing alternative management arrangements for non-regulatory federal laboratories.

- ***If your party forms the next government, what role will non-regulatory federal laboratories play in Canada's science and technology effort?***

Question 5

Context: The Office of the National Science Advisor was terminated in March, 2008, and the government now refers questions on scientific matters to the Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC), which was established as an element of the government's 2007 Science and Technology Strategy. STIC does not have a mandate to initiate studies or reviews on its own, nor does it usually provide advice to the government in a publicly accessible format. This way of operating limits the effectiveness of the strategy by restricting the input of the broader research community and limiting the independence of the committee to seek the wide range of perspectives needed for a strong, innovative Canada.

- ***If your party forms the next government, will you commit to expanding the mandate and independence of the Science, Technology and Innovation Council to consult the research community, report publicly, and provide independent advice directly to the highest levels of government on major science and technology issues?***

Please send your response to:

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