



Canadian Association of University Teachers
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Budget compromises research, hinders prosperity

(Ottawa, March 29, 2012) – The organization representing Canada’s university and college educators says today’s federal budget jeopardizes Canada’s long-term development by weakening the country’s research capacity.

“With this budget, the government turns away from the kind of research that leads to new discoveries in favour of a narrow and short-term commercial agenda,” says James L. Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). “By linking research only to business interests, the government will stifle rather than promote growth and scientific advancement.”

The budget supports a major restructuring of the National Research Council, away from its historic focus on basic research in favor of meeting the short-term needs of the business sector. The three federal granting agencies that provide the bulk of Canada’s vital university-based research capacity received no new funding. Instead, \$37 million will be reallocated to support industry-academic research partnerships.

“Tying research increasingly to commercial interests, as this budget does, will hinder real innovation,” says Turk. “The government fails to understand that most fundamental advances in knowledge that lead to innovative applications come from basic research guided by scientists, not political or commercial interests.”

Further, the announcement of a \$9.6 million funding cut of over three years to Library and Archives Canada will further undermine the institution’s mandate to preserve and make available Canada’s historical, social and cultural heritage.

Turk says CAUT is pleased that the government did not cut education transfer payments to the provinces, but notes that these transfers remain too low to cover inflation and enrolment increases at universities and colleges.

“As recently as 1990, public funding made up 80% of total university operating revenues,” Turk explains. “Today, that has dropped to about 50%, with a greater financial burden shifted onto students and their families.”

“There is nothing in this budget to help students struggling with high fees and debt, to allow universities and colleges to expand student spaces and hire more teachers, or to permit researchers to conduct fundamental and ground-breaking work,” Turk added.

Burdens placed on students, combined with the budget’s announcement of cuts to social programs such as Old Age Security, will only lead to greater intergenerational inequality, says Turk.

The deep cuts to public sector spending threaten to stall the economic recovery and jeopardize future development, Turk warns.

“You can’t cut your way to prosperity.”

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is the national voice of 66,000 academic and general staff at more than 120 universities and colleges across the country.

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