

A bad budget for the future of post-secondary education, research and job training

(Ottawa – March 21, 2013) The budget announced by today by the Federal Government short changes post-secondary education, further diminishes Canada’s research capacity, and undermines training opportunities, according to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).

“On the same day that some of Canada’s world-renowned research projects, like the Experimental Lakes Area, are in process of being dismantled because of last year’s federal budget cuts, the new budget makes matters worse,” said James L. Turk, executive director of CAUT.

“While there is an announced \$37-million for Canada’s three academic research granting councils, this only restores half of what was cut last year and comes with strings that seriously limit its usefulness for advancing knowledge.”

The budget specifies that 80 per cent of the restored money for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council must be spent on collaborations between community colleges and private industry that focus on company needs. Overall, the \$37-million is described as being for “research partnerships with industry.”

“This means there will be no new money for the basic research on which all scientific advancement depends,” said Turk.

The transformation of Canada’s National Research Council, announced in the 2012 Budget, from a leading scientific agency into a body that assists private businesses meet their company-specific needs is accelerated by the allocation of an additional \$121-million over the next two years.

The Canadians Foundation for Innovation, which supports research infrastructure, has been allowed to invest \$225 million of accumulated interest but given no new money.

The Budget continues the promised three percent increase in transfers to provinces for post-secondary education, but this fails to cover increased costs due to inflation and increased enrolment. According to Turk, this will mean additional pressure for tuition fee increases and program cutbacks. The principal additional allocation for post-secondary education is \$19 million over two years for marketing certain fields the government deems important, \$10-million for international marketing to attract foreign students, and \$13-million for summer university-industry internships.

“While training is much ballyhooed in the budget, the reality is that there is little new money for job training. The major announcement is that 60 percent of the existing \$500-million in training through Labour Market Agreements will be transferred to a new program that will provide trainees \$5,000, provided it is matched by the province and the employer – giving employers veto power over what training can be obtained,” said Turk.

All this comes at a time when there is still little information about the effects of the cuts announced in the last Budget and when the Parliamentary Budget Officer is in court trying to force the government to make that information available.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is the national voice of 68,000 academic and general staff at more than 120 universities and colleges across the country.

-30-

Contact: Angela Regnier, communications officer, (office) 613-726-5186, (cell) 613-601-6304