



July 28, 2010

Dr. Edward Grant
The University of British Columbia
Department of Chemistry
2036 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Dear Dr. Grant:

I am writing in response to your letter of June 10, 2010, which you sent on behalf of the Council of Canadian University Chemistry Chairs (CCUCC).

First, let me say that the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) was very pleased that the Federal Government's Budget 2010 provided support to all of our three key priorities—people, discovery and innovation. With regard to discovery research, the Budget specifically mentioned the allocation of \$8 million per year to strengthen our support for advanced research.

At its June meeting, Council approved the overall budget plan for 2010-11, including the allocation of the additional \$8 million to advanced research.

The plans for the specific use of these additional funds were guided by the principles of excellence, fairness, transparency and accountability, principles that also guided us in the changes made recently to the Discovery Grants (DG) Program.

I am happy to inform you that the full \$8 million will be allotted to the Discovery Grants suite of programs. In order to ensure that all cohorts have the benefit of these increases, the funds will ramp up over a number of years. During the ramp-up period, the Research Tools and Instruments Grants Program will be used to balance the expenditures and ensure that the community receives the benefits of the full amount in the short term. Once fully ramped up, the additional funds will be allotted as follows:

- \$3 million for an additional 75 Discovery Accelerator Supplements (DAS), bringing the total number of active accelerators per year to 375. A doubling of the number of DAS was recommended by the International Review Committee and the proposed increase is a step in that direction.
- \$2.5 million will be added to the general Discovery Grants budget. These funds will help alleviate some of the pressure on the program caused by the large number of high quality proposals. We anticipate this pressure to continue to grow, particularly as we welcome the newly appointed Canada Excellence Research Chairs in the natural sciences and engineering.

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- An amount of \$2 million, corresponding to less than 1 percent of the DG Program budget, will be set aside to launch a small number of specific initiatives, augmenting the capacity of the community to address substantial discovery research themes that cannot currently be supported within the context of individual grants. More information will become available on these initiatives in the coming months.
- A small amount will also be set aside for NSERC to retain its ability to deliver programs effectively and maintain healthy linkages with the research community.

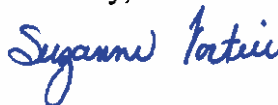
You also commented on the changes made to the peer review process since 2009. These enhancements made to the delivery of the Discovery Grants Program have created a more dynamic funding system, with increased opportunity for researchers with superior accomplishments and contributions to receive substantial increases, regardless of their history in the program. They are consistent with the principles of fairness, merit and excellence which are at the heart of the DG Program. While the context in which the Discovery Grants Program operates has evolved over the past 10 years, especially as a result of the influx of a large number of new faculty members hired by Canadian universities, the program has kept its focus on the same three objectives:

- promoting and maintaining a diversified base of high-quality research capability in the natural sciences and engineering in Canadian universities;
- fostering research excellence; and
- providing a stimulating environment for research training.

Both the increased number of applicants to the DG Program and the globalization of science and technology have resulted in raising the “bar of excellence.” It is now imperative that Canada be a strong contributor on the world scale, meeting world level standards of excellence. The two-step review process implemented in 2009 enables Evaluation Groups to more clearly identify applications that meet and exceed this threshold, irrespective of the geographic location or size of the institution.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to summarize the views of the CCUCC. We value the frank feedback we receive from members of the communities we serve, as it helps us improve our programs and gives us the opportunity to present our perspective and strategy.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Fortier
President, NSERC