

Dressing up a modest budget for post-secondary education

(Ottawa – February 11, 2014) Today's federal budget shortchanges Canada's academic research funding agencies while promising over a billion dollars from future governments' budgets.

"We are disappointed that new money for the major federal funding agencies barely keeps up with inflation, which the government tries to hide amidst dazzling promises totalling over \$1-billion for years long after the next election," said James L. Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. "The good news is none of this year's new money for the funding agencies is targeted, unlike in past budgets."

The three federal funding agencies will receive a total of only \$46-million in new base funding, while the government is giving \$50-million to a new Canada Research Excellence Fund about which no specifics are provided. In addition, the budget promises more than four times that amount to two selected research centres, most of which starts after the next election. Part of this is financed by stripping \$96-million from the National Research Council.

"While the money for this year and next is modest, the government clearly feels a need to appear to be committed to science," said Turk. "This is a tribute to public pressure over the past year that has stressed the importance of science and research."

The budget has no money to address student debt, no new funding for graduate students, and no new money for Aboriginal post-secondary education.

A \$40-million fund is created over the next two years for internships in high demand fields, with the bulk of it going to the Industrial Research Assistance Program to place interns in small and medium sized enterprises. "We are disappointed that so little is being done to address youth unemployment," said Turk.

Turk said one bright spot is the promised First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act, although the core funding will not be available until 2016-2017.

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.

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