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### **Canada's New Budget Holds Small Gains for Research**

*By Karen Birchard*

Canadian academics had a mixed reaction to the [federal budget](#) presented in Parliament on Thursday, which aims to reduce Canada's largest-ever deficit by phasing out stimulus spending and cutting back in many areas. The budget did earmark one-tenth of the remaining funds from last year's economic-stimulus package for higher-education infrastructure, research, technology, and innovation.

"This budget sends an important signal," Paul Davidson, president and chief executive of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, said in a written statement. "It shows that the government recognizes the vital role universities play in creating opportunities for Canadians in the new economy."

However, the government did not restore the nearly \$150-million (Canadian) that it cut from the nation's three research granting councils last year. Researchers had [strongly protested](#) those cuts, and reinstating that money was something that most wish-list submissions from the higher-education sector had requested last year. Instead, the budget allocated only a \$32-million increase.

"Collectively the granting councils are worse off than before, since this isn't going to keep up with inflation," said James Turk,

executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. "The budget is a serious disappointment and shows this government just doesn't understand research and science."

When asked to give the budget a grade, Mr. Turk replied, "It's a D for postsecondary education."

He pointed out that once again, the government has decided to pick research projects for direct federal support and is encouraging universities and colleges to work with the private sector. Canadian researchers, he said, are at risk of being left behind.

The budget allocates nearly a quarter of a billion dollars to the Triumf particle-physics facility, owned by a consortium of universities, on the campus of the University of British Columbia. Nearly \$400-million is provided over five years to the Canadian Space Agency to develop next-generation satellites; and \$18-million over five years for the design phase of the proposed High Arctic Research Station.

It also specified \$15-million for community colleges in the College and Community Innovation Program, which encourages collaborations between colleges and businesses focused on the company's specific needs.

"We're happy campers, because this means the program is doubled in size," said James Knight, president and chief executive of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. "It's been years since the government has had a program for colleges. Universities have a thousand-year history, and we've only got a 40-year history, so we've some catching up to do."

The budget also included funds for 140 postdoctoral fellowships. But undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom carry a heavy debt load, felt they were ignored by the government in this budget.

"This was a missed opportunity by the government," said Katherine Giroux-Bougard, national chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students. "It's disappointing, since students owe around \$13.5-billion to the government in student loans."

Students from Canada's aboriginal population issued a statement saying the budget failed to address the significant gap in higher education participation between aboriginals and others.

A budget footnote: One of the more innovative ways the Canadian government has elected to save money is by getting rid of paper currency. Starting next year, Canadian dollars will be printed on a hardy polymer material.

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