

Society of Canadian Limnologists



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Société canadienne de limnologie

The Honourable Keith Ashfield
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

March 7, 2012

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the aquatic science community of Canada, we wish to express our deep concern about the excessive layoffs affecting highly qualified government research personnel in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, and Parks Canada, among other science-based government departments with a strong emphasis on environmental issues. Although the exact number is known only to the government and the unions, we understand that, under the Workforce Adjustment Directive, hundreds of employees within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, and, most recently, Parks Canada have been identified as affected. We further understand that a significant proportion of these employees are, or will be, declared surplus and that many of these employees are destined to be laid off. The impact of these sweeping changes to the public service workforce will resonate in Canada for years, to the detriment of our fisheries, our Parks, and our essential aquatic resources upon which all Canadians depend. As Canada's only aquatic science society, the Society of Canadian Limnologists speaks on behalf of Canada's freshwater, our most important natural resource. We would like to express our dismay at these drastic and unnecessary layoffs.

We are aware of current financial constraints and the difficult decisions facing the Canadian government. However, these cuts go beyond a financial restructuring, and amount to a dismantling of existing environmental research and monitoring capabilities at a time when the environment is experiencing unprecedented change due to climate warming, invasive species, toxic chemicals, and a host of other insults that humans have introduced on the environment. These actions undermine the credibility not only of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but also of the Canadian Government, and question Canada's commitment to support independent science and effective environmental monitoring and protection. Historically, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been an international model and key player in the development of high standards of marine and freshwater science and policy. Recent actions taken by this government have not gone

unnoticed in Canada and around the world (*Nature* 2012 Volume 483, p6 and *Nature* 2010 Volume 467, p501), and they have begun to stain the Government of Canada's reputation. By contrast, the United States has continued to grow its major research investment under the *National Science Foundation* at a rate of about 5% per year over the past decade, despite the tremendous economic difficulties faced by that country during this time (<http://www.nsf.gov/about/budget/>). Even more significant is the surge in research occurring over the same interval in China and cohort countries (*Nature* 2012, Volume 481, p420). The leaders in the United States and Asia clearly recognize that a vibrant research effort is crucial to their future security and sustainable prosperity. A reversal of Canada's planned layoffs would help to restore the public's perception that this government includes scientific achievement and environmental protection among its priorities.

The Society of Canadian Limnologists represents researchers working in the aquatic sciences across Canada, many of whom work with and rely on the expertise of scientists at Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, and Parks Canada. We are dismayed that the Canadian government does not consider its own ground-breaking work for managing and conserving its freshwater and marine resources as a national priority and a fundamental public responsibility. Your department must ultimately answer to the Canadian citizens who will face the consequences of these cuts to environmental monitoring of pollutants and climate change. We ask you to reconsider your actions.

Sincerely,



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On Behalf of the Society of Canadian Limnologists

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