

Society of Canadian Limnologists



**SCL**

Société canadienne de limnologie

The Honourable Peter Kent  
Minister of the Environment  
Member of Parliament for Thornhill (Ontario)  
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March 5, 2012

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the aquatic scientific community of Canada, we wish to express our deep concern about the excessive layoffs affecting highly qualified government research personnel in Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans 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 Environment Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 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 Parks, our fisheries, 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 Environment Canada, but also of the Canadian Government, and question Canada's

commitment to support independent science and effective environmental monitoring and protection. Historically, Environment Canada has been an international model and key player in the development of high standards of environmental 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 we are running a race and 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 Environment Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Parks Canada. We are dismayed that the Canadian government does not consider its own groundbreaking work for managing and conserving freshwater 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

cc: Prof. Alison Derry, VP SCL, Université du Québec à Montréal  
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