



Dr. Marc Fortin  
Vice-President, Research Partnerships  
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council  
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Society of Canadian Limnologists  
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**Object: Concerns regarding the proposed changes to the NSERC Research Partnerships Program**

Dear Dr. Fortin,

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the recently proposed New Research Partnerships Program at NSERC-CRSNG. For over 3 decades, the Society of Canadian Limnologists (SCL) has represented aquatic science researchers and students at Canadian universities, government agencies, research institutes and private organizations. Reviewing the changes in the NSERC Partnerships Program, we believe that specifically, the newly added requirement for increased partner contributions to these research partnership grants will severely limit our ability to independently conduct research in the field of environmental sciences, including aquatic sciences.

The current funding model for NSERC Strategic Partnership Grants allows for 100% of funding to come from NSERC, and in-kind contributions are considered from industry partners. Most members of the SCL are conducting research with partners, including provincial and federal agencies providing in-kind contributions such as access to equipment and laboratories. It is important to recognize that the current system is beneficial to all parties- the academic researchers and the in-kind contributors fulfilling their mandates and leveraging resources.

Under the new proposed scheme, NSERC contributions will be reduced to 50-60% of total project costs, with the remainder being contributed by partners. While this funding model is logical for research that involves industries, it is not always feasible for environmental research. In addition to industry, our partners most often include provincial and municipal governments, non-profit organizations, and grass-roots organizations. Typically, these groups are under-funded themselves, and rarely have cash available to support research activities at this level. Previous changes to NSERC funding programs removed Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) from being eligible to receive support for students and post-doctoral fellows (ex: USRA). The new proposed changes further reduce the ability of such organizations to contribute to environmental sciences despite their critical role in balancing the views of industries. In-kind contributions are critical to enable Canadian limnologists to collaborate with all these groups.

We believe that partnerships with groups outside of academia is crucial for the success of aquatic environmental research. The issues addressed in Strategic grants held by our members are of great importance and interest to the Canadian society, and only by increasing our communication, outreach, and ultimately partnerships with diverse local, regional, and national groups, can we successfully implement change. Our primary concern is that the environmental research projects conducted by our members often focus on inconvenient truths (e.g., global warming, environmental pollution, societal negligence, lack of sustainability) that may not always be a priority to most traditional industry partners. We feel that encouraging strong partnerships between primary researchers and private, public, and non-profit groups will enable to fully address aquatic environmental issues. Requesting a 50% contribution level is too high, especially for strategic partnership projects whose budget exceeds \$100,000 and occur over multiple years.

Despite our concerns regarding the new requirements for industry contributions to grants, we recognize many positive changes in the New Research Partnerships Program. In particular, the streamlining of several similar programs into one, shorter turn-around times, and lack of submission deadlines will greatly simplify application procedures for our members. We also welcome the addition of support for first-time applicants. We are supportive in general to changes to this program.

In summary, we take particular issue with the changes to the partner contributions, and request that this be reconsidered at NSERC. We consider that a comprehensive partnership programs should recognize the diversity of contributions available within a large range of stakeholders. Governments are now seeing the value of integrating and bridging several sources of knowledge to support decision making in Canada and such bridging should be

reflected in the way funding is allocated. The members of the SCL believe that it is a condition to maintain and augment the credibility and quality of environmental science conducted in Canada. We urge NSERC to re-evaluate its current proposal to allow for the inclusion of environmental research in partnership grants in the future.

Thank you again for allowing organizations such as the SCL to provide comments on this important topic.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the SCL members:



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