

Over \$100 million set for medical research

OTTAWA (CUP) — The scientific community was pleasantly surprised March 19 when the federal government announced a 22.3 percent increase in the budget for the Medical Research Council (MRC) of Canada.

Federal Health Minister Monique Bégin announced the MRC will receive \$100.2 million for 1981-82. The 1980-81 budget was \$18.3 million.

Canadian scientists are both pleased and surprised, in light of recent estimates from the government that research funding would be cut back severely. The MRC had expected an increase of only 9 percent.

This increase would actually represent a cutback, because the rate of inflation for scientific research is higher than the regular inflation rate due to the high cost of importing supplies and equipment.

John Cowan, president of the Canadian Federation of Biological Sciences, attributed the increase to a "sympathetic ear at the Treasury

Board" and the intense lobbying efforts of the scientific organizations.

"There was also an unprecedented amount of individual letter writing, what they called hate mail," he said.

The increased funds will be used to replace outdated research equipment, support additional grant applications, provide funding for training and initiate new research programs.

The Medical Research Council is one of three granting councils which receive funds from the federal government. The councils finance individual

researchers and universities. Announcements are expected soon on the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council.

Cowan said it is "unthinkable for the federal government to fail to treat the other councils equally."

Donald Savage, president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, praised the MRC grant announcement and expressed hope that cash transfers to the provinces for education through the Established Programs Financing (EPF) act

would not be cut back.

"It is of utmost importance that the federal government ensures that they do not sabotage their own efforts to stimulate

research and development in this country by reducing the support of universities through means such as the EPF act," said Savage.

Students not protected

VANCOUVER (CUP) — University of B.C. students have been inhaling contaminated air inside a campus building even after workers were provided with protective masks.

The B.C. Workers Compensation Board was called after several faculty and staff reported breathing problems and sore eyes, safety committee chair Wally Walters says.

But while notices were posted and masks made available for all paid employees, no provisions were made for students. They continued classes without any notification of the health risk or provision for masks. The workers' board has no

jurisdiction over students.

The health hazard appeared when contractors sand blasting the exterior of the building switched from nickel slag, which they temporarily ran out of, to silica sand.

"People were suffering without realizing what the cause was," Walters said. "As soon as we heard from the board we got to work on their recommendations."

A fine white dust has now settled over the entire interior of the building.

The building is considered contaminated until the interior is vacuumed and the air circulation system cleaned out. In the meantime, no classes in the building have been cancelled.

Gays gather at Easter

There'll be a Western Gay Conference next Easter weekend April 17-19.

Starting at registration at Paul Kane House in Edmonton on April 17 - Good Friday - the conference is open to anyone who

is interested. Topics at the conference include gays and the law, civil rights activities, gay alcoholism, overcoming stereotypes, and gay Christians and guilt.

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