



CSEE Canadian Society for
Ecology and Evolution

Société Canadienne
d'Écologie et d'Évolution **SCEE**

April 13, 2010

Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada

Dear Mr. Harper:

I am writing on behalf of the *Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution* (CSEE) to seek your help to avert an impending crisis that will compromise Canada's vital Arctic interests. CSEE is a non-partisan group of ~900 ecologists and evolutionary biologists throughout Canada and is one of the largest scientific societies in the country.

Each year hundreds of Canadian scientists and students use the logistical support of Natural Resources Canada's Polar Continental Shelf Program (PCSP) to conduct research throughout the Canadian north. Research programs span a wide range of important topics, including hydrographic surveys to identify safe shipping routes, fish and wildlife population assessments, the impacts of climate change on northern ecosystems, and traditional knowledge programs to help preserve native cultures.

Research in these remote regions is impossible without the PCSP, viewed by many as a national treasure. Flat funding and escalating costs have already forced the PCSP to greatly reduce the logistical support of Canadian research, including the most competitive peer-reviewed research programs. Research programs deemed "high priority" by independent scientific review face further shortfalls on the order of 25-40% of budgeted expenses. This issue was recently highlighted in an editorial in the influential international journal *Nature*, which noted that "Canadian scientists working in the Arctic often find themselves with government grants to do research, but no funds for the helicopters and sea-planes needed to get people and gear to field sites" (*Nature* 463: 7278, 14 January 2010).

Although some scientists may be able to find funds to subsidize the PCSP shortfall (e.g., through NSERC's northern supplements program), many others will either need to greatly reduce or cancel their Arctic research. Such a reduction in research capacity is most unfortunate as it falls on the heels of Canada's leadership in the International Polar Year, and at a time when other nations challenge Canada's northern interests and Arctic sovereignty. Canada's scientists are a highly visible and respected presence in the

north. Their northern logistical and technical skills have been typically honed through long apprenticeships as undergraduate and graduate students. Limited northern logistical support will reduce student training in the north and thus not only reduce Canada's immediate capability to solve northern issues, but will also produce long-lasting negative impacts on Canada's future research capacity.

We appreciate your Government's interest in wise investments, particularly at a time of budget deficits forced on Canada and other nations by the global financial crisis. Canada's long-term sustainability depends upon strategies that can ensure a productive and vibrant economy. The north is an increasingly important contributor to Canada's economic recovery and future prosperity. We urge you, even in these difficult financial times, to revisit your Government's spending priorities to ensure sufficient funding for Canada's northern research agenda.

I look forward to your response regarding this important matter.

Yours sincerely



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The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

The Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Industry

The Honourable James Michael Flaherty, Minister of Finance

The Honourable Christian Paradis, Minister of Natural Resources

The Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State (Science and Technology)

The Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of the Environment

Mme. Suzanne Fortier, President, NSERC