

Response received June 17, 2009 (CorrespondenceMinister@ic.gc.ca)

Dear Professor Morris:

Thank you for your e-mail of March 19, 2009, expressing the concerns of the Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution regarding the reduced duration of NSERC awards to master's students. I regret the delay in replying to you.

The decision to no longer support a second year of master's studies through NSERC's scholarships program resides with the Council. As part of a review of all of its programs, NSERC identified the second year of master's funding as being less effective at delivering results than the first.

NSERC has indicated that it will maintain its overall duration of support to graduate students to four years, but that this support would now be fully aligned with that of the Canada Graduate Scholarships, which is one year at the master's level and three years at the doctoral level, rather than the optional two years each at the master's and doctoral levels.

The Government of Canada understands the importance of investing in post-graduate education. The federal Science and Technology (S&T) Strategy, Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage, served to create new scholarship opportunities for students. Since the launch of Canada's S&T Strategy in 2007, the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program was expanded to fund over 2,000 additional doctorate students per year. The new Industrial Research and Development Internship Program was launched in 2007 to provide for up to 1,000 one-term internships per year.

Budget 2009, Canada's Economic Action Plan, provides an extra \$87.5 million over the next three years to temporarily expand the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program, which will result in an additional 500 doctoral scholarships and an additional 2,000 master's scholarships. It also allocates \$3.5 million in new funds for the Industrial Research and Development Internship Program over the next two years, as part of the government's stimulus package.

In total, the past three federal budgets earmarked over \$240 million in post-graduate scholarship funding through these programs, in addition to the scholarship funding already administered by the three federal research Granting Councils—NSERC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Once again, thank you for sharing your views. I trust that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Clement