



*Canadian Federation  
of Earth Sciences* | *Fédération canadienne  
des sciences de la Terre*

## *Open Letter*

Calgary, September 28, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Block  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

The Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences / Fédération Canadienne des Sciences de la Terre is pleased to learn that the Government of Canada has decided to increase funding for geologic mapping in Canada's North. We cannot overstate the strategic importance of continuing the task of maintaining the basic geologic inventory of Canada's land mass and continental shelf in light of the most recent developments in earth science knowledge and technology as a basis for economic investment. To carry out its tasks in a well-informed manner, each national government needs efficient and timely access to high quality, spatially defined geologic information across the whole country. Many functions of provincial and local government and the private sector cannot be undertaken effectively without liberal access to this information, acquired by government on behalf of its people. The Geological Survey of Canada is the Federal agency mandated to carry out the geological mapping tasks and assure the safe guarding and broadest possible access to the resulting archives and databases.

Funding for geologic information management and acquisition, of which mapping is certainly a focus, has declined precipitously during the last two decades in Canada. The Geological Survey of Canada is significantly smaller than that of nations facing comparable issues. The GSC currently has a total staff of about 500 and an annual budget for basic geologic mapping of about \$80m. The Australian Geological Survey ('Geoscience Australia') has about the same number of staff as the GSC, but its budget is roughly Can\$147m. Australia has a landmass and population about 2/3 that of Canada and has similar mineral resources (it too, has extensive amounts of 'shield' with comparable mineral assemblages). Another circumpolar nation, Denmark (+Greenland), with a population and landmass of 1/5<sup>th</sup> of that of Canada and a continental shelf area of only 4% of that of Canada, has a geological survey organization with 300 staff and a budget of Can\$57m. CFES/FCST considers this announcement by the federal government to

be a first step towards bringing Canada's geological survey work to a level commensurate with the social, strategic and economic importance of earth resources to the country.

The proposed budget injection for geologic mapping for northern Energy and Minerals will require additional staff. CFES/FCST believes that this will present the GSC with a serious challenge: a survey of the human resources needs of the Canadian Earth Science sector, carried out by CFES/FCST in '07-'08, indicates that the number of earth science graduates from our universities will be insufficient to keep up with the demand from the job market. In addition, the age distribution of staff in Canadian academia and geological survey organizations is significantly skewed to an older demographic.

Labour shortages due to aging baby boomers are anticipated across the board in Canada, and in this too we are not unique in the western world. There is no quick solution to this problem. However, Canada owes a large portion of its wealth to its rich mineral and energy resources, and therefore, to meet the challenge of undertaking the proposed geological mapping of the North in a meaningful timeframe, CFES/FCST recommends that the government supports efforts of the Earth Science community to: i) increase the number of students majoring in this field, ii) improve opportunities for Aboriginal youth to pursue science-based careers and iii) enhances the effectiveness of Canada's immigration policies with respect to immigrant earth scientists.

Again, we offer our congratulations to your government on this very important and positive news for our country.



Ian Young  
President



Bill Mercer  
President-elect

Cc:

Hon. Gary Lunn, Natural Resources Minister

Ms Cassie Doyle, Natural Resources Deputy Minister

Mr Mark Corey, Earth Sciences Sector Assistant Deputy Minister

Drs David Boerner and Marc d'Iorio, Directors General Central & Northern and Atlantic & Western Branches respectively