R&D spending up for 2011

After two years of declining R&D expenditures, Canada’s gross domestic R&D expenditures are expected to total $29.9 billion in 2011, a 2% increase from preliminary expenditures for 2010, reports Statistics Canada. The business enterprise sector, Canada’s largest R&D sector, deserves most of the credit for the overall increase in 2011, with business enterprises expect to spend $15.6 billion on R&D, up 5% from the previous year. Higher education, Canada’s second largest R&D sector, is also helping propel the overall growth with spending projected at $11.3 billion in 2011, an increase of 1%. The business enterprise and higher education sectors account for about 90% of total R&D spending in Canada over the last decade. The federal government projects to spend $2.5 billion on R&D in 2011, down 10.3% from 2010.

While the increase this year is positive, total R&D spending intentions for 2011 are still below the $30.5 billion spent in 2008.

CFI support for Canadian researchers announced

The federal government has announced support for 132 research projects in 31 communities across Canada to be delivered through the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI). CFI is providing $33 million to support Canadian researchers in their work. 38 universities will see funding, including the University of Manitoba which will get $2.2 million for eight projects. A complete database of projects funded is available on the CFI website.

Canada Summer Jobs

Applications are now being accepted for Canada Summer Jobs. The program provides funding to create summer job opportunities for young people aged 15 to 30 years who are full-time students intending to return to their studies in the next school year. Universities are eligible for funding so please coordinate your applications through Government and Community Engagement. The deadline for applications is February 29, 2012.

Tax incentive for charitable donations submission

The U of M made a formal submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance in response to its review of federal tax incentives for charitable donations. The University provided two recommendations to the federal government to build on the success of previous amendments to tax legislation that triggered a rise in donations to charitable organizations, including universities.

The first was to increase the federal tax credit on giving that exceeds a donor’s previous highest giving level. Such a “stretch tax credit” would increase the number of donors who give to charities and motivate a higher level of donations. The second recommendation was to provide further exemptions on gifts of assets by eliminating the capital gains tax on gifts to registered charities of privately held shares and real estate.

It is anticipated that the adoption of these two favourable tax measures would provide additional encouragement and flexibility to the donor community and lead to a significant increase in the number and value of donations to charitable organizations, including universities.

External Relations — Government and Community Engagement
Changes to the Provincial Cabinet

As anticipated, the Premier shuffled his cabinet on Friday, January 13th with a number of ministers and portfolios changing. The departments of Conservation and Water Stewardship are now combined into a single department, with the portfolio given to senior Minister Gord Mackintosh. Family Services is now combined with Labour and will be the portfolio of Jennifer Howard. Healthy Living and Seniors will be combined with Consumer Affairs and Jim Rondeau will hold that responsibility. Immigration will be combined with Multiculturalism and has been assigned to Christine Melnick.

The Premier also added two new members to cabinet, with Ron Kostyshyn becoming the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, and Kevin Chief, MLA for Point Douglas, becoming Minister of the newly created department of Children and Youth Opportunities. Also of note, Erin Selby remains Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy and Dave Chomiak remains Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines. A complete list of Cabinet is available here.

Also announced on January 13th was the creation of a new Priorities and Planning Committee of Cabinet, replacing the Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet (CEDC). The new committee will coordinate major economic and policy initiatives dealing with government priorities. In addition to Premier Selinger, the committee will include Finance Minister Stan Struthers, Health Minister Theresa Oswald, Family Services and Labour Minister Jennifer Howard, Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh, Innovation, Energy and Mines Minister Dave Chomiak, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robinson, as well as a rotating member of the government caucus that has yet to be announced. Anna Rothney will be the secretary to the committee and is a University of Manitoba alumnus.

Changes to Deputy Ministers and Senior Administration

With the reshuffling of departments as part of the announcement on January 13th, there were some changes to the deputy minister portfolios as well. John Clarkson will be moving from Innovation, Energy and Mines to Finance, with Grant Doak replacing him at Innovation, Energy and Mines. Hugh Eliasson will become the new deputy minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism while continuing as Deputy Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade. Cindy Stevens will also do double duty as Deputy Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and Deputy Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs. Jeff Parr will be the Deputy Minister of Family Services and Labour and Jan Sanderson will be Deputy Minister of the new department of Children and Youth Opportunities, while also remaining CEO of Healthy Child Manitoba.

It was also previously announced that Heather Reichert, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy, was leaving the province to become the new Vice-President of Finance with Manitoba Public Insurance, and Gerald Farthing would become the acting Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy while retaining his responsibilities as Deputy Minister of Education.

January also saw a couple of substantial changes within the senior administration. Sid Rogers, Secretary to the Council on Post-Secondary Education, has announced he is leaving COPSE and will be doing a social services project as he transitions into retirement. Premier Selinger’s Chief of Staff Michael Balagus has announced he is leaving the province. Balagus has been credited with many of the NDP’s successes over the last eight years, including the recent election victory. Ihor Michalchyshyn is the new acting Chief of Staff.
Two more KIP projects opened

On January 27, President Barnard, Premier Greg Selinger and federal Minister Vic Toews officially opened two new education and research facilities at the Fort Garry campus – the Biological Sciences Building and the Buller Building Science Laboratories.

The projects were funded through the Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP), and represent a partnership between the federal and provincial governments and the university. The U of M received $32 million in KIP funding for seven projects.

The $13.26 million renovation of the Biological Sciences Building included creating five new teaching labs and two, 40-seat lecture rooms which will serve 2,600 students annually from a number of faculties. The $4.75 million Buller Building Science Laboratories project renovated and upgraded research and teaching laboratories within the Buller Building. The new facilities house modern state-of-the-art advanced research and teaching laboratories that will expose students to leading-edge technologies that give them the level of education and hands-on science research experience they need.

Visionary Conversations

The University of Manitoba has launched a new speaker series hosted by President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. David T. Barnard. At the next event, Water: Too Much, Too Little, Two Lakes join our expert panel for a discussion of water resource issues that impact the supply and quality of water, the environment and the future of this very critical resource to our existence. More information on the February 15th session is available from the website and you can rsvp at government_community@umanitoba.ca. Save the date for these upcoming sessions:

April 11 – Human Rights and Gender Issues
June 13 – The Food We Eat

View past conversations on the U of M YouTube channel.