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Hon. Paul Martin Speech from the Throne's Commentary  
February 2004

*The speech from the throne provides an interesting glimpse into the goals and aspirations of future Martin government(s). This is definitely a pre-election speech, however, the upside is that research and in particular basic research is mentioned in a good light. It is also clear that the signals we have been getting from Ottawa that there will be more and more emphasis on a 'return from investment into basic research were right on the money. **Below are a few excerpts reflecting some of the issues that CFBS has been promoting.***

"We want a Canada that is a world leader in developing and applying the path-breaking technologies of the 21st century - biotechnology, environmental technology, information and communications technologies, health technologies, and nanotechnology. Applying these capabilities to all sectors to build globally competitive firms, from start-ups to multinationals. And creating high-quality jobs that will meet the ambitions of young Canadians - and keep them in this country, working to build an even greater Canada."

*This is basically good news. It is great to see the emphasis on biotechnology and environmental technology. We hope this means that Martin views these as the real future. Notice however, that these are directly tied to applications that will build companies and provide jobs!*

"We foresee a Canada where the increasing number of women entrepreneurs have every opportunity to succeed and contribute a vital new dimension to our economy, a Canada built on innovation with world-class research universities, smart regulation and innovative financing, all combining to make Canada a global leader in the commercialization of bright ideas."

*World class universities are clearly expected to be directly involved in 'the new economy' and in the commercialization of "bright ideas".*

"A sound macroeconomic environment is fundamental. To ensure that the hard-won gains of the past decade are never squandered, the Government of Canada is unalterably committed to fiscal prudence, as evidenced by annual balanced budgets and steady reduction in the debt relative to the size of the economy. This Government will not spend itself into deficit."

*This is a clear warning to all of us. It is from the same section of the speech as the quotes above it about research and universities. Improving the climate for research and development is going to be tied to the success of the economy rather than being viewed solely as an*

*essential investment to ensure a vibrant future economy!! It will be important to ensure that "decision-makers" understand that basic research provides the solid underpinning of tomorrow's applications.*

*While there was nothing in the speech that directly addressed universities and research institutes, there were some overtures to cash strapped students.*

"The Government's goal is to ensure that a lack of financial resources will not be allowed to deny, to those with the motivation and capacity, the opportunity to learn and aspire to excellence in pursuing a skilled trade, a community college diploma, or university degree."

"To advance this objective, the Government of Canada will work with provinces and territories to modernize the Canada Student Loans Program..."

*Clearly they are not intending on increasing university funding to the point where tuition can be decreased. This is in part because university funding is a provincial initiative. Without adequate support, however, we can expect a further deterioration of these institutions that produce the personnel required to make Canada internationally competitive.*

"The Government will create access to capital for the commercialization of science in areas where we can be among the world leaders - in environment, in health, in biotechnology, and in nanotechnology."

*This is very encouraging. One can only hope that the government understands the three levels of early stage financing - angel capital, venture capital and vulture capital! It is really number 1 that we need and number 3 that we have!*

"The Government will also build on the experience and nationwide reach of the National Research Council to help small firms bridge the commercialization gap by providing the research and expertise that small business cannot develop on its own."

"To help integrate and focus these efforts, Canada's new National Science Advisor will re-engage universities, colleges, and enterprise in a truly national science agenda."

*On this promise we can only hope! With the right government agenda and the right people at the helm this office could become our greatest ally.*

"Canadians, as stewards of vast geography and abundant resources, feel a keen sense of responsibility to help the world meet the environmental challenge. And in so doing, to show how this challenge can be turned to advantage through leadership in "green technologies"; through more energy-efficient transportation and housing; and through non-polluting industrial processes. All of which will stimulate innovation, new market opportunities, and cleaner communities."

"We have begun, and we will persevere and go beyond Kyoto to strengthen our environmental stewardship. First, the Government will begin by putting its own house in order. It will undertake a 10-year, \$3.5 billion program to clean up contaminated sites for which the Government

is responsible. And the Government of Canada will augment this with a \$500 million program of similar duration to do its part in the remediation of certain other sites, notably the Sydney tar ponds."

***CFBS has been lobbying in favour of these kinds of initiatives and specifically for Kyoto for the last few years.***

"Fourth, the Government will increase the resources to support innovative environmental technologies and further encourage their commercialization." *Again return on investment!*

***The speech from the throne has underscored a number of issues on which we would like to see action. CFBS will continue to push these issues at every available opportunity.***

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