

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Harper's war on science continues

The decision of the Harper government to go on with the demolition of the Mersey Biodiversity Facility should be shocking to this nation's science community. Or at least I suppose it would be if it wasn't just another example of the continuing war on science (especially life and environmental sciences) begun by the Harperites soon after taking power.

This situation, with skilled and knowledgeable local people and organizations such as the Medway River Salmon Association ready to take over the campus and run it as a non-profit entity with little or no cost to taxpayers, should have been welcomed by the feds. But instead we're seeing this continuing dog-in-the-manger attitude by Harper's henchmen, whose policy seems to be "We no longer want to do any science as a government, and we don't want anyone else to do it either."

It's no wonder that well-respected international science journals like *New Scientist*, *Nature* and others continue to editorialize in shocked tones about Canada's loss of standing in the world's scientific community. Forty years ago we were leaders in many fields, and now we spend a smaller amount of our GDP on research than any other G7 nation and less even than many "third world" countries.



I spent my career in the Geological Survey of Canada watching a general slow decline in capabilities, with seemingly every year a new round of spending cuts, but at least before Harper, the bad news was always delivered with an apologetic tone, and earnest efforts were made to keep the pain minimal. The Liberals may have been haplessly incompetent in any number of ways, but at least they knew the enduring value of research.

But in the last ten years or so, the federal atti-

tude seems to have changed completely, with a more or less official view that science is at best irrelevant and certainly unnecessary. An incredibly stupid and short-sighted attitude for any national government to have, and one that will come with a fearful economic cost as we lose the capability to protect our dwindling resources. Shame on them.

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