

On Wednesday October 21 Robert Mann, CAP President, appeared before the House of Commons Finance Committee (HCFC) to speak to the brief that CAP submitted to the committee in August. He was accompanied by Dominic Ryan of McGill University, Friend of CAP and president of the Canadian Institute for Neutron Scattering.

The brief CAP submitted in the summer was based on a poll of CAP membership organized by Director of Science Policy Paul Vincett. It made three recommendations:

- 1) 10% increased funding for NSERC's Discovery Grants Program (Cost: \$40M per year)
- 2) Initiate a detailed design study of proposed Canada Neutron Centre to supercede the NRU at Chalk River (Cost: \$5M)
- 3) New funding be given for major infrastructure to both double NSERC's Major Resources Support Program (\$35M per year) and for renewal of TRIUMF funding (\$61M per year)

The HCFC is composed of 8 MPs from all parties and sees 8 groups at a time representing various sectors and interests in Canadian society (eg social justice, the auto industry, immigrants, pension funds, flu virus distribution). Each group gets 5 minutes to speak to their case. Then each MP on the committee gets 5 minutes to ask any questions that they want to.

The CAP emphasized that while the community is grateful that under current budgets funds for targeted research will go up by more than 62%, basic research (funded through NSERC's Discovery Grants program) will be reduced by 3.5% by those same budgets. Robert emphasized the importance of basic research and infrastructure funding to support it, while Dominic spoke to the urgency of implementing a design study of the proposed Canada Neutron Centre.

Questions were ones of genuine clarification and interesting -- not at all adversarial. The first for CAP was concerned with how one makes the distinction between basic and targeted research. All of the other physics questions were about the Canada Neutron Centre. Why can't we stockpile Mo99? What was/is wrong with the MAPLE reactor? What will be the consequences if we don't fund the Canada Neutron Centre? Afterward several MPs came to talk to Dominic and Robert. They were all positive, thanked them for coming, and asked a few more clarifying questions.

This was CAP's first submission to the HCFC. Thanks to Paul Vincett and the Science Policy committee, we did a good job of ascending the learning curve, making submission of briefs in the future somewhat easier. The President will be recommending to Council that this be a regular practice.