

June 15, 2011

The Honourable Christian Paradis, M. P.  
Minister, Industry Canada  
C.D. Howe Building  
235 Queen Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

Dear Minister,

As President of Academic Women for Justice, I am writing to ask for your support to ensure that the University of Saskatchewan respects its commitments under the Canada Research Chair Program in accordance with the federal government's published policies on non-discrimination and equity in employment.

Academic Women for Justice is very disturbed by the information we have received from Professor Monique Dubé, Canada Research Chair in Aquatic Ecosystem Health Diagnosis at the University of Saskatchewan, concerning the unfair and inequitable treatment she has received. Issues such as failure to respect commitments under the Canada Research Chair Program, undue delays in the tenure process, harassment, and retaliation tactics, gender bias and chilly climate for women in science suggest the existence at the University of Saskatchewan of an environment that is not in accordance with the goals and conditions of the Canada Research Chair Program.

Professor Dubé has a stellar record. She has developed the Healthy River Ecosystem Assessment System (THREATS), a nationally recognized framework and related software to assess changes in the quality of the water in our rivers and the health of their fish. She has published over fifty articles on her numerous research projects. Her achievements have earned her national and international recognition, including most recently the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council's Synergy award.

Dr Dubé is also committed to teaching and training young scientists, and to communicating the results of her work to the general public. Most recently, she has been honoured by the YMCA in recognition of her outreach activities.

Canadian women have already expressed indignation that the Canada Research Chair Program does not respect the Canadian government's commitment to equity.

In 2003, eight women academics filed a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission alleging that "Industry Canada's Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program is discriminating contrary to s. 5 of the CHRA against individuals (academics) who are members of the protected groups set out in s. 3 of the CHRA, in particular: sex, age, race, sexual orientation, colour, persons with disabilities, national, ethnic origin, and family status."

Their complaint was successful but since the settlement, no real progress has been made. In May 2010, of the nineteen Canada Research Chairs awarded in May 2010 none was given to a woman.

These latest appalling decisions were made in a context where women hold only 25.17% of all research chairs in Canada, based on statistics on Tri-Council funded Research Chairs in Canada compiled by Professor Nadia Ghazzali, NSERC Industrial Alliance Chair on Women in science and engineering at Laval University, and Nicole Morin-Rivest.

Academic Women for Justice feels strongly that the greatest synergy and scientific advancement occurs in working environments that are fair and equitable to women and men, and that issues of gender bias inevitably hinder scientific endeavor and hold back the creation of new knowledge

I would respectfully draw your attention to the comprehensive and rigorous study published in 2007 by the American Association of University Women, entitled *Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*.

This report makes a number of concrete recommendations for improving the working environment for women, to the betterment of the whole scientific community. These suggestions could provide useful guidance for the Canada Research Chair Program in their discussions with eligible universities during the nomination and selection process.

The Canada Research Chair Program has a key role to play in driving the development of cutting-edge research in Canada by fostering the kind of positive, energetic climate for research and research skills building that will enable outstanding researchers to flourish in Canada.

However, the Program will not achieve these goals if it does not require accountability from the universities who receive funding through the Program, funding which ultimately comes from the tax dollars of Canadian women and men. It would appear from Professor Dubé's case that even when outstanding women are successful in obtaining a Canada Research Chair they still have many hurdles to overcome to achieve their full research potential.

Academic Women for Justice recommends, for your consideration, that the University of Saskatchewan be considered ineligible for further funding through the Canada Research Chairs Program until an independent, arms-length inquiry has been carried out into the research climate for women in science at the University of Saskatchewan and corrective measures have been taken.

Yours sincerely,

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<http://people.laps.yorku.ca/people.nsf/researcherprofile?readform&shortname=agnesw>

<http://www.academicwomenforjustice.org/>