Chapter 9
Scientific research

9.1 Federal science policy

The responsibility for federal policy on science resides in the Cabinet. To exercise this authority a Cabinet committee known as the Committee of the Privy Council on Scientific and Industrial Research was established in the National Research Council Act. The Committee is chaired by the Minister designated in the National Research Council Act as responsible for that Council. The members were Ministers of other departments with significant science programs. The National Research Council for many years had the responsibility for advising the Committee on science policy, complemented after 1949 by a panel of senior officials from the science-based departments and agencies.

In 1964, as a result of recommendations by the Royal Commission on Government Organization, a Science Secretariat was created in the Privy Council Office. This Secretariat worked with the Cabinet Secretariat as part of the internal government structure to provide the most accurate and comprehensive background to Ministers when decisions on science policy were made. Its responsibilities included the monitoring of new program submissions, the initiation and formulation of new policies and programs and the co-ordination of government participation in national and international science and technology activities. Later, in 1967, the Science Secretariat was granted responsibility for nominating Counsellors (Scientific) for certain embassies and missions abroad, in consultation with the Department of External Affairs.

In 1966 the federal government established the Science Council of Canada, a Crown corporation charged with independently assessing Canada's scientific and technological resources, requirements and potential and making recommendations thereon by publication of reports. The Science Council is concerned both with research and development and with the application of science and technology to Canada's social and economic problems. It draws its membership from industry, the universities and government, and its views are independent of those of the internal government structure.

The Council has published several reports based on commissioned studies from consultants on different areas of science, and has also published its own reports. Some of the topics include upper atmosphere and space, the proposal for an intensive neutron generator, water resources research, university research and the federal government, scientific and technical information dissemination, earth and marine science, research in fisheries, wildlife, forestry resources and agriculture, a Canadian STOL (short take-off and landing) air transport system, communications network for computers, urban development, pollution problems, policies for basic biology and basic research, and policy issues in development of primary and secondary industries. In addition, the Council recommended that Canada focus its scientific and technological effort through the creation of "major programs" designed to help solve some of the country's social and economic problems. These programs include a space program for Canada, water resources management and development, transportation, urban development, computer applications and scientific and technological aid to developing areas of the world.

In 1967, a Special Senate Committee on Science Policy was formed to consider and report on the scientific policy of the federal government with the object of appraising its priorities, organization, budget and efficiency. The first report, published in December 1970, describes what the Committee considered to be major deficiencies in the policy and the second, published in January 1972, contains specific recommendations on targets and strategies for the 1970s. The third volume of the report recommended specific changes in the federal structures concerned with science and technology.

The Ministry of State for Science and Technology is responsible for the development and formulation of policies for the optimum development and application of science and technology in Canada, the review and assessment of scientific and technological activities and programs within the federal government, and the enhancement of co-operation among the federal government and the provinces, public and private organizations and with other